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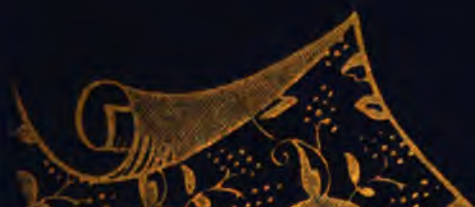


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ON THE WALLABY

by

GUY BOOTHBY



1. Far East - Descri. and trav., 1850-1900
2. Australia - " " " , 1850-1900

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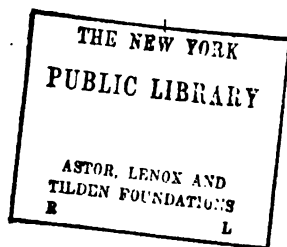
Captain W. B. Watts

With kindest regards from
James T. Hamrick

Nov. 20th 1877.

BFB

**THROUGH THE EAST AND
ACROSS AUSTRALIA**





ACROSS AUSTRALIA

IN THE WILDS

By JOHN RUSSELL WALL

BY THE AUTHOR

LONDON

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.

AND NEW YORK: 15 EAST 57TH STREET

1904

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ON THE WALLABY

OR

THROUGH THE EAST AND ACROSS AUSTRALIA

BY

GUY BOOTHBY

ILLUSTRATED BY BEN. BOOTHBY

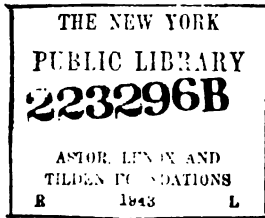
LONDON

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.

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1894

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TO
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
THE EARL OF KINTORE, G.C.M.G.

IN REMEMBRANCE OF MANY KINDNESSES

I DEDICATE THIS BOOK

Frances Edmond 28 Dec. 1942

PREFACE

BE it understood that this book does not pretend to be what it is not! It is the simple record of a strange wandering, *and only that!* Therefore, any person found, after its perusal, in the possession of any ideas other than those intended, will be strenuously advised to discontinue such practices forthwith, by his obliged and humble servant,

THE AUTHOR.

NOTE

'ON the Wallaby' is a slang Australianism for 'On the march.'
It is generally applied to persons tramping the bush in search
of employment.—AUTHOR.

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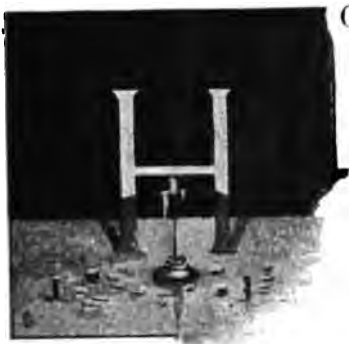
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INTRODUCTION



OW much ?'

'Forty-seven pounds,
sixteen shillings, and eight
pence halfpenny.'

'Great Scott! you don't
really mean to say that's
all ?'

'Every cent !'

The audit was by no
means reassuring.

We wanted money badly, no one will ever know how badly, and forty-seven pounds with a few odd shillings and a halfpenny, while in itself a pleasant sum to possess, is by no means an amount sufficient to justify one in setting out on extensive wanderings.

Things had not gone well with us in the immediate past, and we were determined to go. As the Long'un put it, 'It behoved us to shake the dust of Australia from off our feet.' And though, myself, I don't know how the act of shaking the dust from *off* one's feet should be accomplished, it certainly sounded the proper course to pursue, and when one embarks

on a new undertaking, it is surely best to begin in the most orthodox manner.

Hitherto, we had been eminently respectable, from which it may be inferred that our method of earning our livelihoods had never been the subject of parliamentary, private, or police inquiry. Whatever else we may have been, we certainly were not new chums; for between us we had experienced almost every phase of colonial life, had been jacks of all trades, from Government officials and stock-brokers, to dramatists, actors, conjurors, ventriloquists, gold miners, and station hands. Being rovers to the backbone, we were, consequently, neither the possessors of untold wealth nor were we bigoted in our ideas. There was a sage once who, for reasons unnecessary to state here, lived in an iron tank on Sydney's Circular Quay. Between remittances, he was in a measure well content, and inasmuch as he lived from day to day on such broken victuals as he himself discovered, he came gradually to understand many and curious things. From his lips I learnt wisdom.

'My son!' he once said, looking up at me from the bunghole entrance to his abode, 'believe me, to have nothing is to have everything, and to know starvation is to have acquired all the wisdom of the world.'

I had not then sufficient experience to grasp his meaning, but it has become more clear to me since.

With a show of great secrecy, the Long'un and I had been closeted together all the evening. The

hotel candle spluttered and hissed preparatory to going out, and our hard earned capital, even to the odd halfpenny, lay on the table winking and blinking at us, as much as to say 'Come, make up your minds quickly. In for a penny, in for a pound. Go out into the big world again, see real life, and as far as we are able, we'll help you!'

I looked at the Long'un, and the Long'un looked at me. Evidently the same thoughts were animating us both.

'Old man, is it agreed, then, that we make tracks and see things?'

'It is agreed; let us trek.'

Even so was laid the foundation of our extraordinary journey.

Now there are ways and ways of over-sea travelling. There are first class passages in Orient liners, and there are working passages on dingy ocean tramps. The former are certainly the more luxurious, but the latter, to my thinking, are, to him who would see and understand, infinitely preferable. There is still another way, an intermediate class, called steerage, where one meets many strange folk. These are the people whose lives make a certain class of books, and with them we decided to throw in our lot.

Our minds once made up, the next business became the finding of a boat likely to contain the phases of character we required, and for some days this appeared impossible. Then, late one sultry afternoon, news reached us of the very vessel we wanted, a foreigner, homeward bound. She was

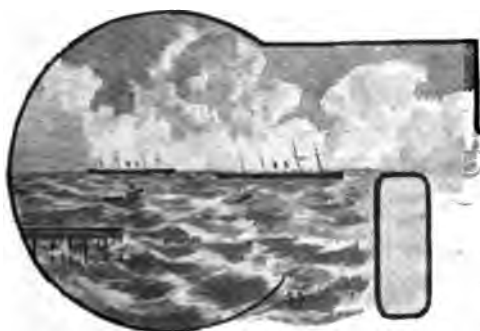
advertised as possessing excellent and cheap steerage accommodation, and, what was still more to our taste, was to sail the following day.

We sought the office instantly, booked our passages for that Clapham Junction of the world, Port Said, and went home to pack.

ON THE WALLABY

CHAPTER I

*WE LEAVE ADELAIDE — STEERAGE PASSENGERS —
ARRIVAL AT COLOMBO*



what a bright,
fresh morning!
A brisk breeze
chases fleecy
clouds across a
turquoise sky;
big green rollers
break in a flouise

of foam on saffron sands, and throw continuous spray over a wooden jetty; two ocean steamers lie out in the offing, and half a dozen small tugs struggle backwards and forwards between them. Such is the scene on the morning of our departure, early in December 1892, bound we know not whither, and to bring up we know not where.

Our baggage has preceded us on board, and when we ourselves follow in a pot-valiant tender, but little larger than a Zanzibari surf-boat, the wind has risen

B

to a moderate gale. Two friends, with expressed solicitude for our welfare, but what is more likely, a certain amount of curiosity as to our departure, accompany us on board, and even now I can see the expression on their faces, as they realise to what sort of imprisonment we have voluntarily condemned ourselves. Some people have a special faculty for realising; they could realise on anything—an idea, a politician's broken promise, or even a Wildcat Silver share. Myself I am not so fortunate. I have only tried to realise once in my life, and then the man seemed doubtful as to how I had come by the article. It only realised seven and sixpence.

The vessel, whose name I will not mention, having in my mind certain remarks which hereafter I may be called upon to make concerning her, is of about 3,000 tons register. No doubt she is a serviceable enough craft, but to our minds, accustomed to the trim tautness of our own mail-boats, the untidiness of her decks, the ungainliness of her crew, and the guttural vociferations of her officers seem unship-shape to the last degree.

Arriving on board, and announcing ourselves steerage passengers, we are with small ceremony directed forrard, and introduced to our quarters, situated deep down in the bowels of the forrard hatch. Even in the bright sunshine, it neither looks nor smells like a pleasant place, so, *for the reason that pride is a sin and must be overcome*, we are not conceited about our *advanced* position in the ship.

At the foot of the companion we find ourselves

in a large, bare hold or saloon (the title is optional), perhaps forty feet long by twenty wide, lighted from the hatchway, which, in fair weather, always remains uncovered. Out of this hold open six small cabins, three on either side, each containing two tiers of iron shelving, which again are divided into six narrow bunks. Thus it will be seen that every cabin is capable of containing twelve occupants, each of whom brings with him, for use in the tropics, a peculiar and distinct, *copyrighted*, odour of his own. In addition to these, a few single cabins are set apart for the use of families and female passengers. In the saloon are fixed, for dining purposes, small deal tables on iron trestles, but each passenger is expected to supply his or her own table utensils, as well as bedding and toilet requisites. Altogether, it is about as dirty and dingy a place as can be imagined.

Steam has been up some time, and as we finish the inspection of our new abode, the whistle sounds for strangers to leave the ship. We conduct our friends, with becoming ceremony, to the gangway, and bid them farewell. It is an impressive moment. Then the launch whistles, the gangway is hauled aboard, the big ship swings slowly round, the screw begins to revolve, and we are on our way.

It would be impossible, even if it could be a matter of interest, to express in words the thoughts which animate us, as standing side by side, we watch the shore fading into the dim distance. Surely, whether one likes or dislikes the place one is leaving, a certain feeling of regret must accompany the last

view of it, and with the lessening of that familiar vision, a peculiar and indescribable tenderness towards it creeps round the heart, never to leave it quite the same again. Adelaide is gone, and the wide world lies before us across the seas.

As we swing round to face down the gulf, a lordly P. & O. boat passes us, also homeward bound, her flags waving, passengers cheering, and her band playing 'Home, sweet Home.' The familiar melody sounds peculiarly sweet across the water, and in return we try to raise a cheer for her. But it is in vain. For the first time we realise that we are on board a foreign boat, where soap and cheering are unknown.

By this time it is nearly two o'clock, and our mid-day meal is being taken forrard in ship's buckets. It consists, we discover, of a diffident soup, so modest that it hides its countenance under a mask of abominable fat; this is followed by some peculiar, parboiled beef, potatoes, and cabbage, the latter being, to our tastes, completely spoiled by the presence of the Fatherland-beloved carraway seed. Bread is served *ad libitum*, but is so sour as to be almost uneatable. Altogether, our first meal on board cannot be reckoned a success, and we express our feelings accordingly.

During its progress, however, we are permitted an opportunity of studying our fellow passengers. They are a motley crew, perhaps sixty-five in number, the like of which I've never seen congregated together before. Their nationalities embrace English, Irish, Scotch, Americans, French, Germans,

Italians, Greeks, Portuguese, Spaniards, Afghans, Hindoos, and Singhalese, while their shore-going occupations must have included every profession,



from the management of oyster saloons to scientific thieving. Among the number are Pyrenean bear leaders, collectors of birds and reptiles, Italian organ grinders, returning settlers, world roving

adventurers, and last, but not least, half a dozen Afghan camel men.

We pass from face to face, until our eyes fall and fasten on a Hadji Mullah, whose home is on the other side of far Kabul. He is exceptionally tall and cadaverous, his face is long, lean, and hatchet shaped, his hands and feet have evidently been designed by an architect with a liking for broad effect, while his clothes are simple swathes of calico, twisted in such a manner as to bring into extra prominence every peculiarity of his extraordinary anatomy. His legs, from the knees downwards, are bare to the winds of heaven, and, as finishing touches, his feet are thrust into unlaced Blucher boots, three sizes too large for him. We were present when he arrived on board. On gaining the deck, he said 'Allah' most emphatically, then turning to the side, shrieked to his compatriots to pass him up his baggage. Somehow it could not be found, and the excitement that followed surpasses description. At length a small bundle, tied up in a dirty red pocket-handkerchief, made its appearance, and was conveyed by its owner with anxious care to his berth below.

As soon as we are fairly under way, and our meagre meal has been disposed of, we betake ourselves to the fo'c's'le head, destined throughout the voyage to be our favourite camping place, and as we watch the coast-line recede from sight, fall to discussing our situation and condition. While thus occupied, we make the acquaintance of our three most trusty allies, some reference to whom may not be out of place.

They are a strange trio. The eldest is a Yorkshireman, broad in back and accent, a native of Bradford, and a vigorous but not over clever ruffian ; the second is an Irishman, from County Galway, rather undersized, and possessed of more than an ordinary share of his country's wit ; while the third, a Londoner from the district of Bayswater, has all the life of the streets at his fingers' ends and a fund of quaint cockney humour to boot. They have been friends—so we discover, later—for many years, and certainly they have seen a great number of queer experiences together, in out-of-the-way corners of the globe : diamond-digging in South Africa, gold-mining in Australia, blackbirding among the Islands, before the mast here, there, and everywhere, often quarrelling, sometimes fighting, but for some strange reason never separating. What is taking them home we cannot discover, but we are continually being assured that it is business of a most important nature. Without hesitation, we nickname them Bradford, Galway, and the Dook of Bayswater, and by these names and none others are they known throughout the voyage. *Genial, good-hearted rascals,—here's a health to you where'er you go. Some day I shall hope to tell the world the strange and curious stories you told me !*

Tea, or by whatever name the meal may be designated, is served at two bells (five o'clock), and consists of bread (sour, as at dinner time), badly boiled rice (and a suicidal description of cake), which is washed down with tea of a museum-like flavour and description. Being disinclined always to go

hungry, it begins to dawn upon us that the sooner we make friends with the cook or his mate, the sooner we shall escape partial starvation. Accordingly, as soon as dinner in the first saloon is over, and the chief cook is released from his duties, we lay our plans for him, determining to win our way into his affections or perish in the attempt.

Our good fortune decrees that he shall be an elderly person of easy-going temperament, and what is still luckier, able to speak a little English, of which accomplishment he is particularly vain.

Now there are ways and ways of flattering a man. There is the heavy-handed compliment, akin to a shovel that brains the recipient right off, and sends him staggering back, powerless to appreciate or return it; there is the grovelling compliment, too abject for return, even if return were needed; and lastly, there is the indirect or insinuated compliment which, with a man of moderate intelligence, not only achieves its end, but in so doing disarms suspicion and creates delight.

We fix him on the weather side of his galley, in the act of lighting his after-dinner pipe, and the following conversation ensues.

THE INEVITABLE. 'Gute Nacht, mein Herr!'

CHIEF COOK. (*Something unintelligible, but doubtless extremely correct.*)

THE LONG'UN (*doubtfully*). 'Wie gehts mit ihrer Gesundheit?'

CHIEF COOK. (*Again unintelligible, but no doubt equally correct.*)

Note.—That's the worst of not learning the answers as well as the questions !

THE INEVITABLE (*with a cold shiver of uncertainty*). 'Das Wetter klärt sich wieder auf !'

CHIEF COOK (*with a stateliness that baffles description*). Vy not mit der English language to me you sprechen? Yes, der sea is much dremendous more quiet becoming !'

THE LONG'UN (*with peculiar flattery*). 'By Jove! we didn't think you spoke English like that! You must have found it a very difficult language to learn?'

CHIEF COOK (*with pride*). 'I der English language learnt ven I vas a great liddle poy, und mit der sheep (ship) from Bremen Haven to der London Dogs (Docks) did run !'

THE INEVITABLE. 'Really! by the way you speak it, I should almost have thought you an Englishman.'

CHIEF COOK. 'Oh! I speak it ver goot, und mein liddle poy Kasper, he speak it ver goot. You gome mit me, und I to you his—how you call it?—Pot?—Oh!—graff (*chuckle of intense satisfaction*) vill show !'

We proceed to his berth and enthusiastically admire the photograph of a peculiarly ugly child, almost hidden in an enormous pinafore.

CHIEF COOK. 'Dot is mein liddle poy, mein son !'

THE LONG'UN (*in an unguarded moment*). 'Why! he's all pinafore !'

CHIEF COOK (*suspiciously*). 'Bin-a-fore? How you say bin-a-fore?'

THE INEVITABLE (*who has been there before*). 'My

friend means to say, that he looks a smart child, able to learn languages quickly, like his father.' (*Gazing at another photo, and adopting a tone of tenderness.*) 'Ah! Your wife!—Sweet face, very sweet face!'

CHIEF COOK. 'Dot is mein gran-mudder, dot is not mein vife!'

THE INEVITABLE. 'Your grandmother? Surely not! and so young—wonderful, wonderful!' (*Passing to another photograph.*) 'This, then, is your wife!'

CHIEF COOK (*with enormous pride*). 'Yah! Dot is mein vife!'

THE LONG'UN (*anxious to retrieve his character*). 'Beautiful! beautiful! What eyes—what hair!!!' etc. etc.

Eventually, overcome with delight, the Chief Cook produces a bottle of schnapps, under the influence of which he becomes still more expansive, and finally closes the interview with an invitation to breakfast, in his cabin, the following morning. We bid him good-night and push forrard, not unsatisfied with the result of our interview.

It is certainly a most unpleasant night; the wind blows a hurricane. We are bucketing round Cape Borda, with every appearance of still heavier weather ahead; the ship rolls horribly, and big seas break continually on her decks with a noise like thunder. It is unfortunately necessary that the hatches should be kept on, and in consequence the atmosphere between decks could be cut with a hand saw. The women without exception are ill, as also are many of the men. Heart-rending noises and moans mix

with the horrible stench, while the ghostly and uncertain light of one solitary lamp serves rather to increase than to diminish the misery of the scene. We shudder and hunt about for our respective berths.

Fortunately, our location is near the companion ladder, so that we are spared the more intense closeness and horror of the after end. But even then our lot is by no means enviable.

The Long'un's couch is on the lower tier, between an Italian organ grinder and an elderly Hindoo; I have mine on top, with my friend the Afghan Hadji on one side, and a Port Said Greek, who, it is rumoured, has been spending an enforced residence in Australia, to escape a charge of murder preferred against him in his native place, on the other. I should imagine that neither of them was a good citizen, nor are they, to my thinking, good bed-fellows. About their qualifications for the former position I may of course be wrong, but of the latter fact there can be no doubt whatsoever. You, gentle reader, have perhaps never experienced the delight of sleeping six in a bed; I therefore advise you, should it ever fall to your lot to have to submit to such indignity, to make sure, once and for all, positively and even with threats of violence, that an Afghan Hadji is not of the number. In the first place, his appearance is objectionable and he smells unpleasantly; secondly, he is not a good sailor, and if his situation happens to be inside, he is often compelled, by the exigencies of his nausea, to clamber

out over five other prostrate bodies, before he can relieve it. This he does regularly once every fifteen minutes, filling up the intervals with emphatic prayers to Allah, which, as narcotics, are as inconvenient as they would appear to be useless.

As the hours wear on, the horrors of the situation increase, and I am compelled to believe that never in the history of the world has daylight been more ardently longed for than by us weary souls between decks to-night. When at length it does arrive, it reveals a fierce and angry sea, whose mountainous waves rise every moment around us, as if preparatory to demolishing our straining and struggling vessel. The decks seem never to be free from breaking seas, and in consequence, as if to add to the discomfort of the unfortunate sick below, it is necessary that the hatches shall be kept on the livelong day.

Everyone is unhappy, but the misery of the Hadji surpasses description. The dignity of his person, if dignity it ever possessed, seems to have entirely departed from him, leaving in its place a gaunt-eyed, pale-cheeked camel of misery, who goes staggering about the decks in an aimless fashion, his poor legs almost refusing to support the weight of his meagre body. In the middle of his peregrinations, for he is unable to keep still, an attack of nausea seizes him, and makes as if it will rend him limb from limb. He reels to a scupper and falls prone. A big sea breaks over him, bruising him against the bulwark, and soaking him through and through. Twice, in less than a quarter of an hour, this happens, and on

each occasion he is rescued by his compatriots, with a fear that is greater than the fear of death staring from his eyes.

This heavy weather continues for four days without cessation, and it is not until we have rounded the Leuwin that it begins to show any signs of abating. Then seeing that we are gradually becoming accustomed to his terrors—Father Neptune slackens his wrath, and within a few days, behold, we are beginning to wish, in our usual discontented fashion, for anything rather than this invariable calm.

Once we are reconciled to the novelty of our position, the days slip quickly by. Our time is occupied in various ways : in reading ; playing Monte under the shadow of the after-awning with a Greek, a bogus Italian Count, and a Yankee adventurer ; or in transcribing to paper the copious funds of copy, more or less fictional, supplied us by our fellow-voyagers. It is, however, when the evening meal is eaten and pipes are lighted, that the most pleasant portion of the day, or rather night, begins for us.

Then in the still hush of the sun-drop, it becomes our custom to draw our blankets up to the fo'c's'le head, and cosily ensconcing ourselves behind the cable range, to hold our levee.

As the sun sinks beneath the horizon, and the long shadows of approaching night steal across the deep, the Afghans appear, and spreading their prayer carpets, and removing their shoes, with faces turned towards the Immemorial East, commence their picturesque devotions. Even the Hadji's angular figure,

standing clear cut against the sky, loses some of its corners. The length and breadth of the ship behind him, the waste of waters and the gathering night, seem to rub out the harshness of his features, as, stretching his arms to heaven, he cries with a voice to which constant exercise has given abnormal power, 'Allah! Ho Akbar; Allah Illallallah!'

One by one the great tropic stars march forth from the guard house of night to take up their silent sentry-go above the black sea, churning into foam, under our forefoot. The Look-out stations himself far forward, and our evening may be said to have properly commenced.

Perhaps the most constant in their attendance, and the most varied in the experiences they have to narrate, are our friends the Three Wanderers. Next to them, in point of interest, may rank my bed-fellow, the handsome Port Said Greek, whose stories are too strange even to be impossible, and whose promise to give me an insight into the slums of Port Said I store up in the treasure house of my memory for a not too distant date. Then there is Herr Ollendorf, who spends his days in tropical Northern Australia, catching birds for European dealers, and whose tales of New Guinea and the Pearl Fisheries mark—though we do not know it then—a new era in our lives. And last, but not least, there is the Earl of Vite Chapelle, a tiny street Arab, who is returning, after a brief but curious sojourn in marvellous Melbourne, to the beloved city of his birth. His tales alone would fill a book.

Turn by turn they spin their yarns, doubtless exaggerating in detail, but fairly truthful in the bulk. Late into the night we talk, not even abashed by the Look-out's monotonous 'All's well!' or silenced when the moon rises into the cloudless sky with a majesty well suited to the beauty of the evening. Before midnight, however, the talk has slackened off; one by one each man seeks his blankets, till at length the fo'c's'le head is all silence, and the Look-out has the night to himself.

In this manner day after day speeds by, each one bringing us nearer to Colombo, our first port of call. Lovely weather accompanies us, the sea is like glass, our passengers are people of absorbing interest, and now that our diet is improved, we have nothing left to wish for.

As I have mentioned before, we have formed no definite plans as to our future, and it is not until we are within two days' steam of Colombo that we make up our minds. Then the stories of our friend the birdcatcher (told among his cages in the fore-peak) take possession of us. They fascinate us strangely; and the more we question and cross-question him, the more the idea grows upon us, until we decide that, instead of going on to Port Said as we first intended, we will trans-ship at Colombo, and endeavour to make our way through the far East to Northern Australia, where on the Pearl Fisheries we confidently believe our Eldorado awaits us.

On the morning of the fifteenth day out, we are greeted with our first view of Ceylon, just discernible

through a faint haze, far distant on our starboard bow. By the time breakfast is finished, we have brought it well abeam, and catamarans and native fishing boats are dodging about on all sides of us. At sun time we are in full sight of Colombo, and before the mid-day meal is over, and we have plumed ourselves for shore going, we have picked up the pilot and are entering the harbour.



FIRST VIEW OF CEYLON

Having no cases of infectious disease on board, pratique is quickly granted, and bidding our friends on board 'good-bye,' we collect our baggage, charter a boat, and are pulled ashore.

Long after we are out of hearing, we can see the Duke of Bayswater and the Earl of Vite Chapelle on the fo'c's'le head, waving their caps to us in token of farewell.

CHAPTER II

COLOMBO—KANDY—ANURADHAPURA

RICKSHAW AND COOLIE

IT is certainly very good to be ashore again, and moreover to me Colombo is a pleasure that never palls. It is astonishing how little is changed; every thing seems just as when we left it last. The same coolies,

the same barges, the same impulsive tongues jabbering all round us. The same boatmen shriek and quarrel in our honour, the same money-changers offer us a small but appreciative welcome; and when we leave the landing place and enter the street, to find the rickshaw coolies, just as of old, sitting on their shafts, chewing betel-nut and chattering in the well-remembered fashion, we begin to believe we have never been away at all.

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A little naked beggar boy runs beside us, flicking his plump sides, and imploring backsheesh in heart-rending tones, till we say something in the vernacular which causes him to flee and curse us in safety from afar; then some one playing with a mongoose in a corner, hearing what has passed, looks up with a grin which is so full of sympathy that we know and feel we are at home once more.

Now, if there is one place in this world more than another where sooner or later, if you but exercise patience, you shall meet whomsoever you wish, the name of that place is the Grand Oriental, Colombo. Into this caravanserái, day and night, clatter men and women from the uttermost parts of the earth. Dining in the great saloon, or smoking in the verandah, one may meet and converse with yellow-skinned tea men from Hong Kong, grey-bearded squatters from Australia, keen-eyed merchants from Japan, pink and white tourists from England, pearlers from Torres Straits, and explorers and adventurers from everywhere this side of the great Unknown. They arrive to-day, to depart to-morrow, and as they say 'good-bye,' more come to take their places. And so the everlasting game goes forward, but the Grand Oriental changes not.

The first thing to be done on arrival is to secure rooms, and after this is accomplished, to enjoy a bath. The water is refreshingly clear and cool, and the view from the bath-room window overlooking the hotel garden, is as beautiful as anything to be found in the East. Here, palms of seemingly endless

variety, graceful ferns, brilliant yellow and purple hibiscus, tamarinds, and the fragrant champac, grow side by side in grandest luxuriance, while beneath their shelter thrive begonias, bromelias, fuchsias, petunias, and countless varieties of flowering plants. Through this exquisite tracery look in the roofs of houses, each with its tiles of different tint; a perfume of flowers suggestive of the Lotos Isles comes with the view, and the cloudless sapphire sky crowns all.

Dressed again, there are many old friends to be visited: friends who, though living in the midst of ever changing faces, seem never to forget. Two there are in the main street, Mahomedans both, and



dealers in precious stones. Immediately we appear, touts from all the shops surround us, imploring our patronage for their respective masters; but our friends suddenly sight us, and though it is years since we saw them last, remember us instantly, and dash out to disperse the noisy crowd, and to beg us to take seats inside their shop, that they may make us welcome in proper form.

This proper form is without any attempt at business, and takes the shape of lemon-squash and sweetmeats, mixed up with many compliments and recollections of bygone days.

Thence we pass on to another and yet another, always with the same kindly welcome greeting us. Before we have paid our last call, the sun is down, and it is time to return to dinner.

After our *al fresco* meals on board ship, a real dinner, well cooked, and served on china and clean linen, with its accompanying glass and silver, has a peculiar charm. We linger over each course, pay befitting attention to a dish of mangoes, and finally come to an anchor, with cigars, in the broad verandah, where white-robed servants move silently about, attentive to our wants.

The noises of the streets are hushed. An almost painful quiet reigns. The subdued chatter of a knot of rickshaw coolies, across the road, blends so harmoniously with the starlight, that the cries of the boatmen, from among the myriad harbour lights, come almost as a relief to the general stillness. A man in a neighbouring chair says sleepily to his companion, 'My dear fellow! I know the whole facts of the case—he got into trouble with one of the rajahs, and shot himself for a Lucknow dancing girl.' Trying to imagine the rest of the story gives me a waking nightmare. But even their voices gradually drop down, till at peace with all the world we climb the cool stone stairs to our respective chambers, and almost before our heads touch the pillows, are sound asleep.

Of all hours of the twenty-four in tropical countries, there can be no doubt that those of the early morning are the most enjoyable. Rising with the day and turning out, pyjama clad, into the divisioned verandah of my room, to watch the city coming back to life, and the sun appearing like a giant refreshed above the fluted tiles of the house-tops is to me a pleasure always new. And again I like the Indian and Cinghalese fashion of serving the *Chota-hazare* in one's bedroom verandah. To sit, eat, and watch the crowds of natives pass chattering by to their daily occupations, and whilst so doing to ward off the onslaught of voracious crows, is an experience one will not soon forget. Anything like the impudence and persistent thieving of these abandoned birds, I have never met with elsewhere.

Void of shame and moral responsibilities, deaf to entreaties, threats, and expostulations, they carry on their nefarious trade unabashed. Happen but for one moment to turn from your breakfast table, and a marauder swoops down, with the result that your choicest morsel is gone. You are amazed, but it does not strike you as anything to be annoyed at, in fact you think it rather amusing than otherwise, and butter another. Then your next door neighbour appears in his verandah and wishes you good morning. You turn for a moment to reply to him, —a flutter of wings, a caw of triumph, and your second tit-bit has gone the way of the first. Then, if you are properly constituted, you become annoyed,

but while you are arranging your feelings, another brigand, with a deep design in his heart, of which you, poor innocent, have no idea, flutters down and perches on the verandah rail.

‘Ha, ha! my friend!’ you chuckle, ‘you shall pay for this,’ and resolving to annihilate him on the spot, you dash into your bedroom for a stick. But this, believe me, is exactly what he wants. He has lured you from your guard, and when you return it is to find that the remainder of your breakfast has flown to a neighbouring house-top. Noting your discomfiture, half a dozen miscreants assemble on an adjacent tree, and perform a pæan of victory, the theme of which seems to be somewhat after this fashion :

TENORS. ‘Caw, caw! got him again!’

BASSES (*with marvellous regard for time*). ‘Caw, caw, caw! We’ve got him, we’ve got him, we’ve got him, got, got, got him again!’

Being new at the game, you shake your fist at them, and while wondering if you shall order some more breakfast, run up the scale of your abusive vocabulary.

But at this juncture the native barber appears with his case of razors and a lime, which latter, as it is Christmas week, he begs you will accept as his gift, and so your thoughts are distracted. While shaving you (and this is shaving, not tomahawking), he recalls the fact that he had the honour of performing the same service for you ten years ago. Further than that, he may possibly be able to set you right



STREET IN PETTAH

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as to the room you then occupied, the day you arrived, and the boat by which your honour sailed. You are visibly filled with wonder, but say nothing lest you prove how little worthy of such remembrance you are.

When you have breakfasted, the most instructive way to spend a Colombo morning, unless your soul hankers after conjurors and cobra fights, is to wander past Slave Island, with its picturesque lagoon and groves of palm trees, past blind beggars, sweetmeat sellers, and story tellers, to the native quarter of Pettah.

In this locality—the Whitechapel of Colombo—one is for the first time brought face to face with the true native element. Here may be seen as strange a mixture of races, as will be found anywhere in the East. Humanity of every hue, shape, and dress, crowds the narrow streets: Arabs in flowing burnous; Mahommedans with baggy breeches and high conical hats; Cinghalese dandies in petticoats and European jackets (their glossy black hair neatly rolled up in feminine fashion behind the head, and surmounted with an enormous tortoise-shell comb); Tamuls in loin cloths and naught else but the burnished livery of the sun; yellow-robed Buddhist priests, Kandyans, Malays, and in fact representatives of every Eastern nationality, all intent upon their own business, and nearly all chewing betel-nut.

To a modest man, in whose education the little peculiarities of Eastern customs have formed no

part, I can imagine that many of the sights crowded into these streets would be extremely painful. Years ago, we ourselves, unconscious in our innocence, entered the quarter on the one side, to leave it on the other with a blush that had soaked through our skin deep into our underclothing. But since then we have learnt many things, and false modesty has been crowded out. With the natives



BUNGALOW IN CINNAMON GARDENS

themselves it is a case of 'Honi soit qui mal y pense.' And all things considered, perhaps it is just as well.

After the native quarter, the Cinnamon Gardens, with their sister quarter of Colpetty, where the fashionable bungalows are situated, are most worth seeing. It would be impossible for an amateur word-painter like myself to do adequate justice to the beauties of the scenery hereabouts : but let me try.

The roads are of a deep vermilion colour, bordered on either side by grassy banks, flowering shrubs, rustling bamboos, and trees whose boundless wealth of blossom intermingling overhead throws a kindly shade upon the passing wayfarer. Elegant bungalows, and vandyke brown huts, peep out from gardens little short of heavenly, and now and again, through the open doors of these said huts, glimpses may be obtained of the little housewife inside, cumbered like Martha with much serving; while, outside, her tiny brown offspring roll and tumble in the roads, in the full enjoyment of their lives, but in constant peril from passing vehicles.

On the principle, that to be in Ceylon and to see only Colombo, is folly; to be in Ceylon and see Colombo and Kandy, is sense; but to be in Ceylon, and see Colombo, Kandy, and the ancient ruins of Anuradhapura is complete wisdom, we decide to make tracks for Kandy, and thence to attempt to get on to the last named city as best we can.

The train for Kandy, seventy-five miles distant, starts at seven thirty A.M. and is due to arrive about eleven thirty *the same morning*. I emphasise the latter fact, for the reason that many people decline to believe it, and the inference that the railway authorities are not reckless in the speed of the trains is apt to be misleading. They (both the authorities and the trains) believe in going slow, and at least we can consistently pay them the compliment of saying that they act up to their belief. If you

should have a business appointment in Kandy, it would be better to walk than to train, otherwise you certainly won't keep it.

The trains themselves are pretty toys, with engines built to the Indian gauge, and carriages like pill-boxes; the officials are elaborate individuals, gorgeously upholstered and fully conscious of their own importance.

Having secured our tickets and places, we start. The speed at first is almost desperate, possibly twenty-five miles an hour. The line runs over marshy padi fields, interspersed with lovely clumps of jungle. Now and again we cross roads where the native keeper, with all the fuss of an important government official, waves his flag until we are out of sight, and then retires, to rest and be admired, until the time arrives for him to perform the same function for the evening train.

About half-past nine we leave Rambukana behind us (the names are as delightful as the country) and commence our ascent, wriggling like a gigantic snake through scenery that would hold the veriest pagan spell-bound. No words put on paper, could give an idea of a thousandth part of its beauty. Waterfalls, ravines, forest vistas, ferns and creepers greet the eye in bewildering confusion at every turn. The nearest thing to a description would perhaps be the utterance of a fair young American, who, in company with her husband or lover, shares our carriage, and for five minutes (the only five minutes throughout the journey) has sat spell-bound. 'Jim,' she says,

in an awed whisper, 'if you ask me, I reckon that fairly licks creation.' And so it does!

Zigzagging up and up, here, there, and every-



where, one moment passing through thick forests, only the next to leap out on to the bald face of mountains, we obtain views of the lovely misty valley beneath us, and of other peaks stretching still further to the southward.

But the acme of all is attained, when we open out on to Sensation Rock, so called from being the place where the Kings of Kandy were wont to throw their prisoners over in days gone by. (What a pleasant sensation it must have been for the folk thrown over!) Here on one side, the masses of overhanging rock seem certain to fall upon and crush us; while on the other, we can look down, nigh upon two thousand feet, sheer drop, into the valley below. It is indeed a sight to be remembered, but the sensations produced are not as enjoyable as they might be. To my fancy, it is too much like hanging by the tips of one's fingers from the cross of St. Paul's, to be really pleasant. •

Further along the line we come to Peredeniya, famous for its botanical gardens, to reach which a bridge must be crossed, over the Mahawella Ganga, having one span of something like seven hundred feet. These gardens are among the most celebrated in the world, and boast many and extraordinary botanical treasures, among others the lovely Thunbergia creeper, and a magnificent avenue of India-rubber trees (*Ficus elastica*.)

Shortly after eleven thirty, satiated with scenic loveliness, we reach our destination, the ancient capital of Ceylon. Kandy, once the residence of kings, situated about sixteen hundred feet above sea level, in a sort of mountain cup, surrounded by hills, can, however, only claim to have been the capital of the island for about the last three hundred years. Before she came into being, the principal

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city and seat of government, was Polonarua, now a vast ruin, situated far away in the north, and famed in history as a city of marvellous beauty and splendour. Yet again, this wonderful place cannot claim to be the oldest, for going still further back, even as far as to five hundred years before the Christian era, we find in the ancient chronicles of the Buddhists, mention made of a still greater city, named Anuradhapura: a city which even up to very late years has been regarded as almost mythical, but the ruins of which, situated about ninety miles due north, now lie open for all the world to visit.

On arrival in Kandy, we make haste to see all that is to be seen. Our first visit is to the Palace of the Kings, a building wearing a decidedly European air, accounted for by the fact that it was built by the Portuguese, when they held the island in about the year sixteen hundred. It has, of course, long since lost its ancient use, and is now reserved only for government purposes. Standing on the edge of a lovely lake, it looks away across the blue waters towards the Matale Hills, where Hunasgeriya Peak shows faintly through the clouds. The view from the terrace is one that will not soon be forgotten.

In the centre of the lake is a tiny island, now used as a government powder magazine, which, in days gone by, had the honour of being the king's harem, and about which, if one cares to believe all one hears, many curious stories are related.

At no great distance from the palace stands the far-famed Maligawa Dalada, or the Buddhist temple

of the Sacred Tooth; a spot which marks to the followers of that religion, one, if not *the* most sacred, of the many sacred spots upon the island. From the outside it presents few attractive features, and the prospect on entering is gloomy and sombre in the extreme. The dresses of the priests and pilgrims, and the never failing supply of flowers on the altars, are the only touches of colour in the scene. But when the visitor has penetrated fairly into the heart of the building, all this is changed. Suddenly, and without warning, he is brought face to face with a staggering fortune, in the shape of a solid silver door, set in carved ivory. This door opens into a small inner chamber, where stands a table of the same precious metal, fronting the first sacred shrine. Within this shrine are five others, all blazing with gems and goldwork. Inside the innermost shrine of all, resting on a lotus leaf of pure gold, lies the most sacred relic of Buddhism—the tooth of Buddha.

Strange to say, considering the veneration paid to it, it is neither the tooth of Buddha, nor the tooth of anyone else, but is simply, so it is said, a molar of human workmanship, and a very bad molar at that. Once every year this sacred relic is exposed to the gaze of the vulgar, but only for the space of a few seconds. For the rest of the time it reposes upon, what is of much more value, its lotus leaf of gold. In the temple is also treasured the sacred alms pot about which so many strange yarns have been invented. We wanted to handle all these things for

ourselves—particularly the silver door, and the lotus leaf of gold—but the authorities seemed disinclined to permit it. I suppose they had good and sufficient reasons for their refusal.

To me the most striking part of the whole affair was the priest who showed us round. He was small and spare, with glittering, dark eyes, a shaven head, and an odour of his own. He wore a coarse yellow robe turned back over the shoulder, leaving the right breast bare. From this exposure I argued that a good bath would have done him no harm.

These priests are purely a mendicant order, and are popularly supposed to live only on what is given them by the people, to eat no flesh, and to consume what things they do partake of before noon. Moreover, they are compelled to practise celibacy, and it is one of the rules of their order that they shall carry a fan, in order that they may cover their eyes when passing such vanities as women. Their duties are to keep the temple spick and span (in which they certainly fail), to conduct the services, and to watch the sacred lamp, which, year in, year out, must constantly be kept burning. In their odd moments they go out into the highways and byways in search of provender.

Having explored Kandy to our satisfaction, we made up our minds, with a gravity befitting such an important undertaking, and determined to try for the ruined city of Anuradhapura, located in the jungle, about ninety miles due north. Accordingly, once more commending ourselves to Providence and

the railway commissioners of Ceylon, we set off, and duly landed at Matale, a straggling little town (once a royal residence), whence, at intervals, a coach runs to Damboola, another town of considerable importance. We found this latter place, after a lovely drive through mountain gorges, situated at the base of an immense dark red crag, of curious shape, rising to a height of about five hundred feet, at the junction of the plain country with the mountains. From the crag a superb view may be obtained of the green sea of jungle stretching away to the northward, and of the varied coloured valleys which lie behind it. It was in this northern jungle that we were to seek the cities of the dead.

Evidently there must be some life in that mysterious region, for on inquiry we were informed, by an ancient of the place, that Her Majesty's royal mail was daily despatched to the district, and moreover, that the coach would leave Damboola precisely at sundown. Being of a garrulous nature, our informant went on to say, that should we desire it, we could, by payment of an extra fee, retain the whole coach for our own special and private use. As this seemed the only way of reaching Anuradhapura, we were compelled to avail ourselves of it, and to leave unvisited what we so much desired to see, the famous cave temples of Damboola.

To have the grandeur and dignity of Her Majesty's mail entirely for ourselves was too great a temptation to resist, so accordingly, giving our friend the wherewithal, we bade him retain it for us, and

continued our inspection of the township, conscious of our increased importance.

Shortly before sundown we were back again in the main street, awaiting the arrival of the coach, and momentarily expecting the blast of the horn and the appearance round the corner of the four prancing bays. Five minutes went by, ten minutes, and even a quarter of an hour, and still no sign of our equipage. Visions of deception and appropriated money began to flit before our eyes; we gazed with suspicion upon our native adviser, who with many salaams continued to inform us that it would be here instantly without fail!

Just as our patience was giving way, there appeared round the corner a shabby old bullock bandy, drawn by a couple of trotting bullocks, and driven by a native scarecrow pitiful to behold.

Our friend's satisfaction knew no bounds. 'Sahibs!' he said, 'see, it is here. Her Majesty's mail!'

Down toppled our pride like a house of cards. 'What!' we shrieked, 'do you mean to tell us that that old go-cart is Her Majesty's mail, and that you suppose we glorious Sahibs from a far country are going to ride all night in that old hearse? No, my ancient, take our advice and trot out your Oxford "Highflyer," or there will be serious trouble in the camp.'

But it was no use arguing, he only nodded his head like a mandarin, and repeated continually,

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‘Her Majesty’s mail-cart; very superb and much magnificent!’

Putting our dignities in our pockets, we proceeded to stow ourselves in with the mailbags, feeling that there was every prospect of our passing a picturesque and horrible night. But we did not start.

Inquiring the meaning of the delay, we were informed that the mail could not be despatched until the arrival of the mailman, who presently, in the shape of a villanously scarred and half obliterated Tamul, unclad save for a loin cloth, made his appearance. Round his neck was suspended a peculiar bugle, evidently his badge of office. While regarding it, we felt constrained to say to him: ‘Sonny! we’re grateful to you for your thoughtfulness, but while travelling it is our custom to make our own music; perhaps the mayor of the town or the custodian of the museum would take charge of that relic till you come back. Leave it, we implore you.’

But he paid no attention, only rolled his betelnut, spat on and annihilated a caterpillar, then gave the signal to start. The driver roused up his team, two curs intended to run after us and bark but thought better of it, and presently we were dashing down the jungle track at a comparatively furious pace. Dangling our legs over the tailboard we silently contemplated nature, and wondered what would happen if the bottom of the cart fell out, or a tiger should pounce upon us by the way. But neither of these things happened, and we soon discovered that the only adventure we need fear was an

insane desire for music on the part of the mailman. He was an enthusiast, and even rupees wouldn't stop him ; he took them, and blew the harder.

Save when the stars managed to get a look at us through the overhanging foliage, the night was dark as pitch. The thick jungle on either hand loomed black and lonesome, and despite the beauty of the fireflies flitting through the picturesque Mana grass, it needed very little imagination to conjure up the near presence of all sorts of horrible and noxious animals. Presently the moon rose, and her coming developed a fairylike picture that was more like the transformation scene in a pantomime than anything else.

Every six miles we came upon a cluster of native habitations built on clearings in the dense Chenar jungle. Apparently they had no business there but the production of a fresh pair of bullocks in exchange for our jaded beasts. These villages were always a surprise to us. The first intimation we received of our approach to them was a long and furious blast of the mailman's horn, a peculiar and melancholy music, ventriloqual in its effect. I call it ventriloqual because there was no possible chance of locating it. It seemed to start from somewhere in the region of the axle, then to sneak off into the jungle, to finally come back upon us in a caterwaulish moan from the trees overhead. Twice we bore it without complaint ; then, encouraged perhaps by the fact that he was still alive, he attempted a single variation—only one : just a short heart-rending scream, followed by

a long-drawn sob. Before, however, he was properly through with it we were upon him, shaking our fists in his face and daring him under threats of instant death to attempt such a thing again. He retreated to the side of the driver, whence ever and anon he cast suspicious glances in our direction. Personally, I never contemplated murder with such equanimity before.

So the night wore on. Every hour found us, by reason of our cramped positions, growing more and more stiff and tired. First one leg went to sleep, then the other; then we developed internal pains, and began to realise what it must be to have cramp in the stomach, liver disease, rheumatism, and lumbago, all at once and all in aggravated forms. Every time we stopped to change bullocks, we got down and stamped around in the hope of introducing a little circulation into our blood, but no sooner were we back in our places than the old pains recommenced, and kept us waiting in speechless agony for the end of the next six miles. Finally, we both dropped off into an uneasy doze.

But we were not destined to enjoy this long, for the sudden stoppage of the cart, together with a shriek so awful, so full of human suffering, brought us instantly wide awake again, quaking in an ecstasy of terror. Leaping to the ground, we turned to see what had happened, fully expecting to find two or three natives in deadly peril, or, at the very least, three children run over by the cart. Day was just breaking and we looked and looked, but only a few

native huts peering out of the mist and a couple of bullocks placidly awaiting our arrival, were to be seen. Then we noticed our mailman edging away to a safe distance, and the fact slowly dawned upon us that, taking advantage of our slumbers, he had again been giving vent to his uncontrollable musical ambition. Registering a vow to exterminate him on the first convenient opportunity, we retook our places and proceeded.

An hour later the sun was high above the tree tops, innumerable birds fluttered through the jungle or flew screaming across our path, monkeys of all sizes and in all stages of imbecility passed the time of day to us from the trees, while above all, not more than three miles distant, towered a monstrous dome, the Dagoba of Abhayagiri, built nearly a hundred years before the birth of Christ. By this we knew that we were in sight of Anuradhapura.

The present appearance of this far-famed city is, to say the least of it, disappointing. In the first place a thriving modern village, with a court-house, a government rest-house, and a population of 1,500 souls, stands upon what must once have been the very centre of the vast metropolis. We drew up before the rest-house.

Now a rest-house is not always a synonym for comfort, but it has at least the advantage of being a government institution, and as such, it is a matter of instant dismissal for the landlord if he be found guilty of either incivility or extortion. By his agreement he is compelled to find accommodation for

travellers for three days at a fixed rate, and on this score we had no reason to be dissatisfied.

A bath and breakfast having been attended to, we hunted up authorities, and, before starting on our voyage of discovery, satisfied ourselves as to the best things to see first.

When one considers that these scattered ruins are all that remain of a city whose size was fifty-two miles in circumference, or, in other words, sixteen miles across from gate to gate, covering a space of 256 square miles, some vague idea will be gained of the power of time to obliterate, and a city to crumble away.

With commendable zeal the government of Ceylon has taken up the exploration of these ruins, and the result is that under the superintendence of an able archæologist, a large amount of interesting and valuable work has been accomplished.

The most striking and characteristic of the buildings of Anuradhapura are the lofty Dagobas¹ whose domes rise high into the heavens on every hand. In construction they are simply gigantic masses of red brickwork, hemispherical in shape, intended originally to act as receptacles for sacred remains. Round these monster buildings, between the stones of which innumerable trees have taken root, run platforms of masonry, while here and there tiny shrines have been arranged, before which offerings of flowers are continually deposited.

The principal Dagobas are the Ruaniwellé (signi-

¹ From *da*, a relic, and *geba*, a receptacle.

fyng gold dust), one hundred and fifty feet high, standing on a terrace commanding a fine view of the city, and according to the chronicles, built by one Gaimono B.C. 150. The Thuparamaya, built B.C. 500, and intended for the reception of Buddha's collar-bone; the Jaitawanarama, once three hundred and fifteen feet high, but now barely two hundred and sixty, erected A.D. 310; and the Abhayagiri (fortress of safety), B.C. 87. This latter, perhaps the finest of all, was built to commemorate a national victory, and stood no less than four hundred and ten feet high, or equal to the tallest cathedral spire in England. At the base it is nearly four hundred feet in diameter, and it is computed to contain nearly twenty million feet of masonry.

. Leaving the great Dagobas we find ourselves surrounded by massive ruins, broken pillars, formless blocks of masonry, delicately traced and fluted columns, and sarcophagi of all descriptions, mixed up in hopeless confusion with rude stone figures of bulls and elephants. Returning to the back of our rest-house, we again hunt up authorities, and discover the Lowa maha-paya, or Great Palace of Brass, once the chief glory of this departed city, but the only remaining signs of it now are sixteen hundred columns of granite, each twelve feet high and three feet thick, giving evidence of having once been beautifully spaced and arranged. Two centuries before Christ they formed part of a palace beside which many of our great buildings of the present day would be as naught. Built in the form of a

square, with sides two hundred and thirty feet long, it was, so the chronicles affirm, nine stories high, and contained no less than one hundred rooms on each floor. For a roof it possessed a solid sheet of burnished brass, an item in itself which must have been a winking wonder for miles around. To-day its grandeur has departed, and its brazen roof has vanished into the lumber-room of eternity, the grandly frescoed walls have crumbled into dust, and where may once have stood the high priest's throne of ivory, we found an old hen foraging for her chicks. And so perhaps, in the centuries yet unborn, when Time, the remorseless, has crushed between his fingers the grandeurs that to-day we think so imperishable, will an old hen scratch for her brood on the soil above the altar stones of Westminster. Overcome with the thought, we returned by way of Great King Street to our abode for tiffin.

After the meal, replacing our helmets, we started forth once more, this time to explore the greatest curiosity of all, the Temple of the Sacred Bo-tree. Here still flourishes what is beyond doubt the oldest known tree in the wide wide world. It was planted (so I am told by my never-failing friend, the Chronicle Mahawanso) by one Devenipiatissa, in the year B.C. 288, which gives it an age therefore of two thousand one hundred and eighty-one years. Never has its wood been defiled by steel, and day after day and hour by hour the leaves, which must on no account be touched until they fall, are reverently gathered up by the everlasting stream of pilgrims visiting the

shrine. According to the Buddhist belief, this tree was once part and parcel of the tree under which Gautama Buddha sat at the time of his death or apotheosis. Standing in the centre of the topmost of three platforms of masonry and surrounded by an iron railing, its branches, tenderly supported, straggle and twine all over the courtyard. Yellow-robed priests watch beside it continually, and every possible care is taken to ensure its preservation. Neatness is evidently not one of the obligations imposed upon the monks, for the courtyard is strewn with offerings of rice, broken begging bowls, and fragments of lamps used at midnight worship, remembrances of the thousands of pilgrims who pass in and out of this holy place.

We of a far country and a far different religion, one whose age beside that of this ancient tree is as a poplar tree to a giant oak, stand and watch the ceaseless quivering of its leaves with an attempt to grasp something of its history. But it is impossible—the distance of time is too vast. As we look, the yellow-robed ministers of this ancient faith pass to and fro, their vestments contrasting artistically with the dull brickwork around them. On a high wall gorgeous peacocks preen themselves against the sunlight, while hordes of monkeys slip, busily chattering, from branch to branch, waiting for chances to descend and loot the offerings of the faithful.

On the whole, if one excepts the tree itself, the temple has little to recommend it, but to except the tree would be to liken it to Westminster Abbey

without its monuments, and for this reason alone we will not criticise too closely. As we leave the building, a party of pilgrims approach the red-tiled gateway, and raising their hands above their heads, cry in sacred greeting, 'Sadhu! Sadhu! Sadhu!' It was an impressive little incident—a fitting termination to our visit to the ancient shrine.

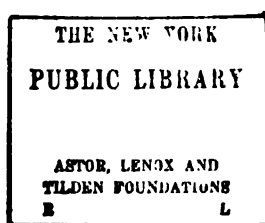
By this time the sun like a ball of red fire is resting on the tree-topped horizon, throwing long shafts of golden light through the ruined streets and upon the great Dagobas, till it seems to us that we are standing in the City of the Living Fire. An intense hush clasps everything, and this becomes even more marked when the sun sinks below the horizon. With his departure a strange chill creeps across the world, and we begin to feel that we are no longer in the city of the living fire, but really in the city of the dead.

We return to our abode, struggling with a feeling akin to sadness. It is Christmas Eve: a night for happy thoughts, a night on which to make merry with one's friends. But is this a place for merry-making, with the destruction of twenty-four dead centuries around us? No! a thousand times no! So after dinner drawing our chairs into the verandah, and while waiting for the moon to rise, we sit and talk in hushed voices of the past, the great, mysterious past.

When with slow and stately progress the orb of night sails into the heavens, it is a ghostly scene that she illumines. We look across monster Dagobas,



ANURADHAPURA BY MOONLIGHT



strange stone pillars, ruined masonry—monuments of a long dead age—towards the weird, unearthly jungle. Hardly a sound disturbs the stillness. A few lamps twinkle here and there, and while we watch, as if to add still further to the feeling of intense loneliness, a solitary jackal lifts up his voice among the ruins and laments the passing of the world.

And what a city this must have been more than two thousand weary years ago. In the Mahawanso we read that it was a place of magnificent streets, the chief of which alone was computed to contain no less than eleven thousand houses. We are told that it had its temples in which, day and night, services were conducted with glorious pomp and pageantry. We know that it had its palace, whose great brazen roof shone like a jewelled casket in the sky, covering many hundred rooms inlaid with gold, silver, and ivory. We know that it had its places of mart and of amusement, its crowded streets, barracks, alms-houses, and public baths; and last of all we are told that it contained a population amounting to something like three million souls. Kings' retinues marched along her public ways, religious processions were to be met with at every turn, and gorgeously caparisoned state elephants, with ponderous tread, swung through the crowds. Tradesmen cried their wares, keen-eyed men of business jostled lovers blind to everyone and everything save themselves. And to-night, where are they all? Where are the kings and soldiers, the tradesmen, priests, men of business and lovers? Gone, gone, gone!

disappeared into the great darkness behind the veil of time, at rest these twenty-four long centuries. And that city? What remains of her? Only a mass of irrecognisable ruins, through which the night winds moan and lonely jackals howl!

And yet above all, throwing strange shadows across the burnt-up earth, and smoothing with loving hand the ravages of time, looks down the moon, just as she gazed upon the city in its grandeur, so many hundred years ago. Silent and cold the goddess of night watches over these ruins, as she watched over Babylon and stately Egypt; and just as she saw the building of the pyramids, and the destruction of Pompeii, so has she seen the city of Anurādhapura, both in her pride and in her desolation.

The long shadows deepen. A melancholy chant, part of some midnight service, rises from the great Dagoba. A soft wind sighs among the palm trees. It is getting cold, let us to bed, before we come to believe that we, too, have been dead these long two thousand years.

CHAPTER III

COLOMBO—PENANG—SINGAPORE—OPIUM DENS

ON our return to Colombo we moved our belongings to the British India

Hotel, which,

though not outwardly so imposing

as the Grand Oriental, is equally comfortable and certainly much quieter. A pleasant, old-fashioned rambling place we found it, combining with an airy situation an extensive view of the coast line and a close proximity to the city. Government House adjoins it on one side, the officers' quarters of the barracks on the other, a row of dejected cocoa trees nod at each other across the way, and under their shade beggars of all kinds and descriptions sit continually.

One disagreeable fact met us at the railway station, and came home with us to stay. That was the reminder that we were running short of money.

Our voyage from Australia had cost us nearly twenty pounds, our hotel expenses in Colombo and visit to Anuradhapura another ten, consequently, we were left with many thousand miles still to overcome, and only 17*l.* 16*s.* 8½*d.* on which to overcome them.

The situation was a disagreeable one in every way, but it had to be faced, and the best way to face it was to set about something at once. Sitting on a bench upon the Galleface, watching the great southern rollers come booming in, we thought the question steadily out, and at length, after much argument, decided it to our satisfaction. The die was cast, and as it eventually proved, our luck had triumphed.

The rest of the day was devoted to browsing among the shipping in the harbour, in search of a boat that would take us further east. Several were boarded, but all in vain: they were either not going our way, or they gave palpable evidence that they required no extra assistance. Thoroughly disgusted with the mercantile marine of England, we had to give it up and turn shorewards. As we approached the landing-place, sounds of strife reached our ears. Pulling in to see what the fun might be, we found a crowd of boatmen shrieking and gesticulating round a short thick-set Englishman (a good deal the worse for liquor), in whom we recognised the chief officer of the only steamboat we had not visited that afternoon. The Long'un was panting for a struggle, but I was for under-

standing matters first. 'Hold on,' I said; 'if he can't savey the lingo, this business may be just into our hands.'

Once alongside, we leaped ashore and elbowed our way through the crowd to the Englishman's side. Hemmed in as he was, he could neither advance nor retreat, and the more he endeavoured to appease his persecutors the more persistent they became.

The dialogue (everyone speaking at once, boatmen, relatives and friends) was conducted somewhat as follows:

'Sah! you havee boat—my boat, sah!' (flood of native Billingsgate); 'you keepee two hours five minute, sah!' (more abuse in the vernacular). 'Now you say two rupee, sah!' (general chorus of disgust). 'No, sah!'

ENGLISHMAN (*face the colour of a Sturt pea, suppressing an intense desire to strike*). 'You double dashed, blanked, longshore, black lubbers. Speak English, and I'll talk to you!'

BOATMAN. 'My boat, sah! my boat, sah! I row you "Fiji Monarch"—den Trincomalee boat, den mail-boat, sah! You big drunk, sah, you no understand. Now you say two rupee, sah! (*spits emphatically*). No, sah!'

Redoubled chorus of disapproval as we step in.

THE INEVITABLE (*assuming his blandest manner*). 'Excuse me, but can we be of service to you?'

ENGLISHMAN. 'Thankee; much obliged, I'm sure.

I can't savey their damned lingo, and don't know what they want of me.'

THE INEVITABLE. 'First tell me what they have done for you.'

ENGLISHMAN. 'Took me from my boat over yonder, "The Lass of Burmah," to the "Fiji Monarch," then to the Trincomalee boat, then to the mail-boat, and back here.'

THE INEVITABLE. 'How long did it take you?'

ENGLISHMAN (*rather hazily*). 'Couldn't say; not more than an hour any way.'

THE INEVITABLE. 'Leave it to us; we'll see you through. Start and push your way out into the street.' (Slips an anna into a small boy's hand and whispers, 'Call three rickshaws.')

Traitorous small boy slips away. Crowd clamours louder and louder.

Once in the street the Englishman and Long'un mount their rickshaws, and the Inevitable proceeds to address the crowd.

'My friends, it is useless to make trouble; you know very well you're trying it on. Your legal fare is one rupee!'

THE LEADER OF THE GANG. 'Three rupee, sah! that Sahib big drunk.'

THE INEVITABLE (*taking money from his pocket*). 'Three rupees. Very well. Give me back the one the Sahib gave you.'

The proper fare is unsuspectingly returned and pocketed, then, mounting his rickshaw, he continues his oration.

‘People of an alien race, let this be a lesson to you. When your fare is tendered, have the wit to keep it. Abandon extortion, live righteously, and all may yet be well with you. Pray for me!’ (To the rickshaw coolies :) ‘Now boys! “The British India” as hard as you can scoot.’

The boys bound forward and the rickshaws are flying up the street before the crowd properly realise the situation.

Then they start in pursuit, clamouring and



shrieking like souls possessed. But we have a good start and reach the hotel in time to dismiss our coolies before they appear round the corner. Discovering where we have run to earth, they set up a dismal wailing, which eventually brings out the manager, with abuse and a cane. Finally they are induced to disperse, in all probability to regret not having been satisfied with their legal fare.

Once inside, our friend effusively expresses his gratitude, and consents to take supper with us, eventually remaining the night. By bed-time he

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is in full possession of our difficulty, and to show his gratitude, has definitely promised us an opportunity of working our way to Singapore aboard his boat. She is to sail on New Year's Day, and it will behove us to be on board as early as possible on that morning. In the meantime we may celebrate the birth of the New Year, secure in the fact that our immediate future is provided for.

In consideration of the festive season, and in order that we might not feel the pangs of home-sickness too strong upon us, Providence sent us a baker's dozen of young tea-planters to see us through. They arrived fresh from their plantations on the morning of New Year's Eve. Many of them had not seen civilisation since the same time last year. In ages they varied from eighteen to thirty, but in temperament and desires they seemed peculiarly the same.

Their main ambition seemed to be to make as much noise as possible, consume as much mixed liquor as they had room for, and see as much of each other and the world in general, as time and money would permit. We all dined together, and afterwards held an impromptu concert, at which many of the ladies resident in the hotel assisted. When they (the ladies) had retired, we (the male population) kept the fun going with great spirit until within five minutes of the birth of the New Year, when, adjourning to the ladies' windows, we serenaded them with 'Home, sweet Home,' and 'God save the Queen,'

with considerable fervour. Rickshaw racing in the moonlight followed, and after that—but there, over the rest of the night we had better draw a kindly blank!

Next morning we had paid our bill, and were aboard our boat before the town clocks had struck



IN COLOMBO HARBOUR

six. We found her a powerful, paintless old tramp, of less than 2,000 tons burden, and engined up to 250 nominal horse power; she was heavily laden for Hong Kong via Penang and Singapore, and she carried a mixed crew, with Seedee boy stokers.

Having taken the precaution to make our appearance in old working clothes, we attracted no attention, and when we had interviewed our friend

the chief officer, we were told to go forrard and report ourselves to the bo'sun.

Ten minutes later, coaling over, the barges were shoving off, and we, barefooted, and grimy as sweeps, were being initiated into the mysteries of washing down.

Shortly after noon we got under way and steamed out of the harbour, not sorry, in spite of our enjoyable stay in Ceylon, to be once more upon our journey. Outside the breakwater a brisk sea met us and gave us a hearty welcome back to the bosom of Father Ocean. There was a thoroughness about it that we could both appreciate.

I must own that I have travelled in more comfortable places than a ship's fo'c's'le, and also that I have met with better food than biscuit and salt horse, but I doubt if, despite these minor drawbacks, it would be possible to find a healthier and jollier life than Jack's. We were given as much work as we could get through, and during our watches below were too tired to think much about our surroundings. At any rate, before we had been many days at sea we were not only quite accustomed to it, but heartily enjoying the experience.

Fortunately, the whole way across the Sea of Bengal we had splendid weather. The old tramp proved herself a fair sea-boat, and our companions forrard, with two exceptions, were as jolly a set as you'd find anywhere.

Five days after leaving Colombo we sighted the coast of Achin (Sumatra)—low lying on the starboard

bow ; and by the same token, that night I saw the grandest exhibition of phosphorised sea it has ever been my good fortune to behold. From the swiftly sliding water alongside, to the distant shore, lying like a black smudge under the starlight, the whole ocean appeared a mass of glittering light. Forrard the boat seemed to be eating her way through diamond-spangled cotton wool, while aft, her wake had all the appearance of a road of burnished silver. A small boat, pounding along a couple of miles to port of us, looked to be churning up an acre of electric flame, and so still was the night that the grating of her ash lift came quite distinctly across the intervening stretch of water. It was altogether a night to be remembered.

Early in the first dog watch of the seventh day, we sighted the approach to Singapore, and by the time the cuddy bell had rung for breakfast had steamed round the island and brought up alongside the wharf.

From a distance, the P. & O. Wharf at Singapore is a place of singular beauty. One enters it to the north of a small island, a bold piece of colouring, crowned with a wealth of tropical vegetation, the vivid green of which harmonises artistically with the terra-cotta coloured cliffs, the quaintly tiled roofs of the wharf buildings, and the bungalows dotted among the palms on the hill-side. I believe in the Malay tongue Singapore is called 'the Lion City,' while in Hindustanee it means 'A place of meeting.' Without doubt, the latter name more aptly describes it.

The harbour was crowded with shipping : gunboats, dingy English and foreign tramps, French, Chinese, and Dutch mail-boats, sampans, prahus, yachts, all mixed up with coal barges and mosquito-like steam launches. They were sea gipsies, every one of them, with tales of their own to tell of the mysteries of the mighty deep.

After breakfast, having completed all the work required of us, we changed our apparel, bade our shipmates and our benefactor, the chief officer, 'good-bye,' and stepped ashore once more to seek our fortunes.

In our youth, an unappreciated study of geography taught us that Singapore is a British possession, situated close upon the equatorial line : a fact which, before we had been long ashore, was thoroughly borne in upon us. It was first cousin, yet a different heat, to Colombo, a muggier and much more disagreeable temperature.

A thing which is calculated to strike the new comer with surprise is the tremendous preponderance of the Chinese element in this city. Numbering I believe something like half a million, these heathens fairly swarm over everything, and their own particular quarter, with its sights and smells, is a place to see once and never to venture near again.

There are many other peculiarities about Singapore, and among them is the frequency with which the name of Raffles is met with. It pervades everything. There is Raffles Street, Raffles Court, Raffles

House, Raffles Road, Raffles Library, Raffles Hair-cutting Saloon, and I am given to understand, even Raffles Pudding. The name is derived from a certain Sir Stamford Raffles, who, fifty odd years ago, was a shining light in the Straits Settlements. Originally appointed Governor of Java, which post he held for six years, he was required by the English Government to hand back the Island, with all that appertained thereto, improvements included, to its original conquerors the Dutch. This he did, as history relates, with no good grace, being one of those far-sighted individuals who could see no wisdom in giving up this priceless treasure to such a nation.

From Batavia Raffles came north to what was then the small Malayan fishing village of Singapore. Here he started on his own account, foreseeing that by its geographical position at the entrance to the Straits of Malacca and the China Sea, Singapore must speedily become a place of great importance. Having buried the first Lady Raffles in Java, he married, for his second wife, the daughter of the Sultan of Johore, and on the land he obtained with her the present settlement was built. Without doubt it is one of the most important of our British possessions in the East.

It was too hot to walk up to the town, so, calling rickshaws, we ascended in luxury. The Chinaman who dragged us was a fine specimen of his race, broad shouldered, strong limbed, a perfect beast of burden. He wore no clothing save a loin cloth, and

a peculiar, dishcover-shaped hat. The idea is generally entertained that the Malays do all the rickshaw business. On the contrary the Malay does not drag rickshaws, nor does he do anything else in the way of work; he prefers loafing. Give him a warm spot to sit in, an inexhaustible amount of betel-nut to chew, someone to talk to, and he'll scratch himself, spit, swap lies, and be as happy as the day is long. When he does do anything that isn't for himself alone, he accompanies it with as much grumbling and ill humour as he can manage to squeeze into the time the operation takes him. That is the Malay character all over.

When he has no other way of making himself objectionable, he runs amuck: in other words, he works himself into such a passion that he goes clean off his head, and charges headlong down the most crowded streets, stabbing with his creese (a tiny dagger about six inches long) at everybody within his reach. Under these circumstances it is permissible to shoot him—that is, if you have time to stay and see about it. If you haven't, you go up a lamp or verandah post, and tell other people what they should do, and what you would do if you hadn't promised your maiden aunt never to shed blood.

The approach to the town from the P. & O. Wharf is peculiar; a jungle-clad hill rises on the left, while squashy paddi fields and a general air of dampness

suggestive of cholera, fever, and ague, occupy the right and most of the lower ground.

On the hill-side, nestling among luxuriant masses of cocoa, areca, and sugar palms, we catch glimpses of charming bungalows. The foliage is simply exquisite, and here and there we renew acquaintance with the Licuale palm, peculiar to the Malay Peninsula, which in its dried state forms that unpleasant instrument of torture known to our youth as the Penang lawyer.

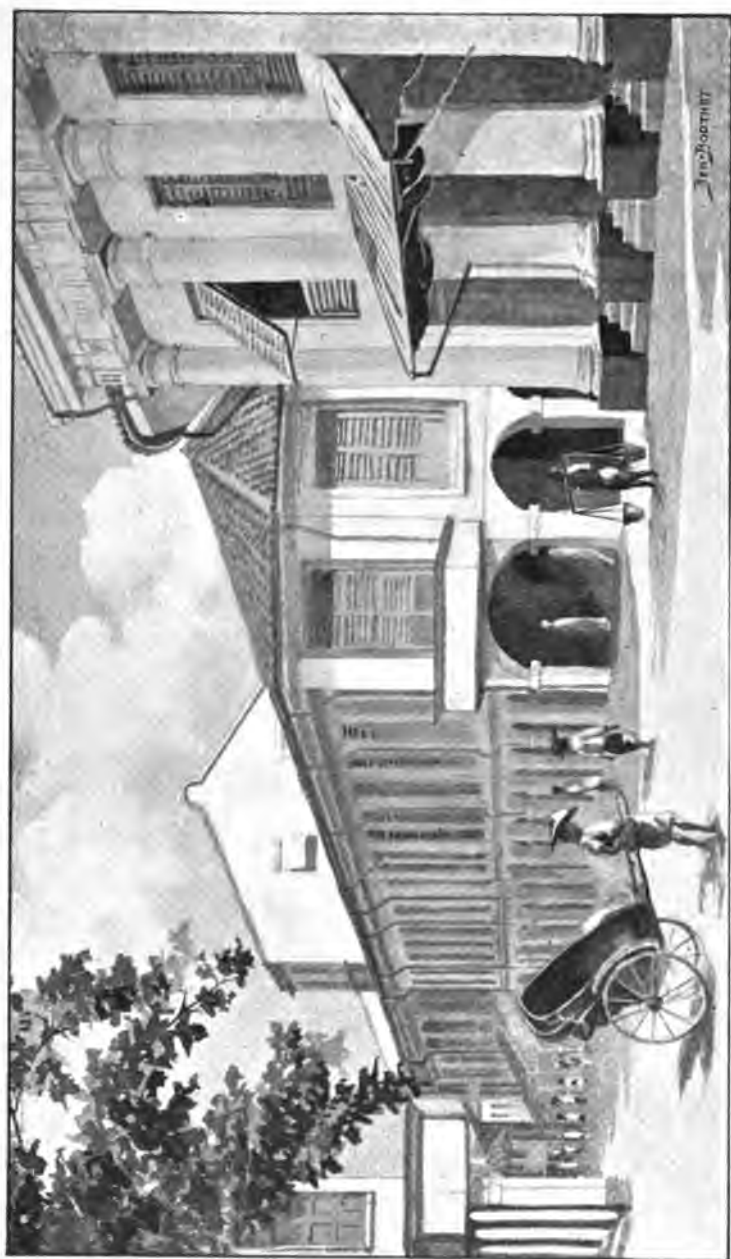
Arriving on the outskirts of the town we begin to understand something of what lies before us. Though evidences of Western civilisation confront us on either hand, in the shape of steam tramways, street name-plates, and legible inscriptions setting forth the nearest roads to the police station, the native quarter of Singapore has a distinctiveness quite its own. Hundreds of rickshaws crowd the narrow streets, Chinese and Malay merchants, clerks, coolies, and porters, with itinerant vendors of edibles, jostle each other with small ceremony. As in Colombo, every Eastern nation is represented, for, besides the Chinese and Malayan population, Hindoos, Cinghalese, Siamese, Arabs, Japanese, Mahilla men, and natives from all parts of the Eastern Archipelago, make this their common meeting place. Chinese cook-shops, on whose counters are displayed, in appetising profusion, roast dog, rat, cat, etc. etc.; vie with pottery sellers, fan-tan hells, and licensed opium dens. Through the doors of the latter

glimpses can now and again be obtained of the sodden soulless wretches within.

In the open streets barbers and perruquiers, perform their trades; heads are shaved, pig-tails combed, plaited or adorned, according to the taste or fancy of the patient sitter, while among all, yellow-skinned Chinese and Malayan babies roll, tumble, and play, regardless of the stream of traffic around them.

Another thing which strikes outsiders as peculiar, is the fact that each district has its own police service. In one quarter we meet the stately Sikh, clad in Khaki uniform, idling his way along, apparently inattentive, but at the same time all regardful of the life around him. Further on we find the merry little Ghoorka, and further still the stately English Robert. It is no uncommon thing to meet in the Chinese quarter a Sikh leading to the lock-up half a dozen unwilling Chinamen, whose pigtails, for convenience sake, he has tied together, and the ends of which he holds in his hand. He doesn't seem to mind the inconvenience half as much as the Chinamen, and somehow they're not very much concerned about it either.

With the consciousness of a depleted purse never absent from us, we kept our eyes open for an hotel where we might find cheapness, if possible combined with a certain amount of cleanliness. In search of this our coolie toiled up one street and down another, till at length almost in the heart of the native quarter, our eyes were attracted to a sign which seemed to



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hint that we had at last arrived at the description of place we wanted. We went in to inquire. The interior was certainly not in keeping with the gorgeous pretentiousness of the signboard. The landlord was a Portuguese of more than usually villanous type, and his wife, who at the time of our arrival was suffering from a swollen jaw, which fortunately prevented her from indulging in her usual conversation, was presumably of the same nationality. As the rooms were moderately clean (this was about all that could be said for them), we wasted no time, but entered into negotiations, and decided to try it, trusting that Providence would not allow us to be robbed or murdered. It was our intention to see as much native life as we could during our stay ; after that to endeavour to secure another boat, and again work our way onwards.

Life in Singapore varies very little from life in India and Ceylon, if one substitutes the Malay servant for the Hindoo and Cinghalese, which is saying a good deal. The bungalows, the means of locomotion, the heat, the mosquitos, and in a measure the perfume of the streets, are the same. The only difference is that Singapore has all their undesirable qualities in the most complicated and aggravated forms.

We soon discovered that our hotel was famous for many things. During the time we were there it was remarkable for being the rendezvous of every white loafer in the settlement. These gentry, doubtless for reasons of their own, did not show up very

much in the day-time, but as soon as night fell, they crept out of every disused dog kennel in the neighbourhood to make our caravanserai their meeting place. Then for a space of six hours they drank, smoked a brand of tobacco the reek of which blistered the wall paper, perjured and profaned themselves, till the house fairly rocked under the strain. Not unfrequently they quarrelled, and on one occasion knives were drawn; but their patron saint never seemed to allow any of them to be killed, probably for fear of having to take charge of them elsewhere.

One night we were permitted the privilege of exploring a Chinese opium den in full blast of business. The man who conducted us was a low-caste Englishman, who, from his own account (and I believe him, for he hadn't energy enough to lie about it), had lived in the slums of Singapore for well-nigh ten years. How he had managed to support himself during that time we could not discover, but one thing at least is certain, he did no work. His affability was his one redeeming feature, and on the consideration entered into before we set out—namely, that we should pay all expenses and stand him two drinks when we returned—he agreed to pilot us through the lowest parts of the town. On our side we stipulated that if any murders were to be committed, houses burned, or eccentricities of a similar kind indulged in, we should not be expected to participate beyond collecting our witness fees at the inquest afterwards. Having failed in an attempt to extort an addi-

tional two of Scotch cold, he said we had better set out.

It was a close, sultry evening, with a lot of rumbling thunder about. Everything we touched was clammy, and it needed almost painful exertion to raise one's voice above a whisper. Up to that time I had entertained a sort of lingering idea that our hotel was not situated in any too reputable a neighbourhood, but before we had gone a hundred yards I discovered that it was a sort of Belgrave Square compared with that through which our guide was leading us. In a dim half-conscious spirit of precaution, I endeavoured to keep tally of the streets through which we passed, but, after



A SINGAPORE ALLEY BY MOONLIGHT

innumerable twistings and turnings, down Malay Street, up Pekin Street, through Canton, Calcutta, and Madras Streets, into Johore Street (these directions must not be taken as an authentic logbook of our route), my brain began to reel, and I resolved simply to trust to luck to find our way back, should we be unfortunate enough to lose our guide. This,

indeed, was not unlikely, for every street was crowded to its utmost holding capacity. The bazaars of Singapore at night are things which should be taken in homœopathic doses—one experience will last a lifetime.

Passing down a narrow street or alley, into which the accumulated filth of centuries seemed to have found its way, we paused before a narrow door, upon which our guide knocked in a peculiar fashion. In the interval of waiting he condescended to inform us that we were about to enter one of the worst dens in the city, worse perhaps from the fact that it was illicit—that is, unlicensed by the Government. Hence the precaution taken in admitting us.

Twice or thrice our companion repeated his signals without any apparent notice being taken. Then suddenly a small shutter in the door slid back, and a ray of light fell on us. The scrutiny was evidently not of a satisfactory nature, for the shutter closed again, and a muttered conversation ensued within. After a minute the door swung open, and we were bidden enter. We found ourselves in a narrow passage, barely three feet wide, littered with filthy garbage, and smelling abominably. Down this passage we picked our way, until we brought up on the threshold of a long low room, the ceiling of which was coated out of all recognition by the blackened smoke of years.

Round the walls ran three tiers of bunks for the accommodation of smokers, and each bunk was several degrees filthier than the room. As far as we could

judge from a cursory glance, it contained about ten or a dozen persons, three-fourths of whom were lolling in their bunks, either smoking or asleep. Three of the smokers were females, the rest males of all nationalities and ages. A Chinaman who, judging from appearances, could certainly not have seen less than a hundred summers, was evidently the ruling spirit of the place. He it was who admitted us, and even among the gang with whom he had to deal, his word ruled as law. The atmosphere was like pea-soup, and was momentarily getting thicker, but the denser it became the more the other occupants of the room seemed to enjoy it.

At this juncture our guide, philosopher, and friend became anxious to try a pipe, but this we were disinclined to permit for obvious reasons; nor were we tempted to indulge ourselves, though the intense enjoyment and supreme content manifested by those who did, certainly seemed to indicate an amount of pleasure, the opportunity for the enjoyment of which it would be folly to let slip. Sometimes an almost perfect stillness reigned in the room, broken only by the heavy stertorous breathing of the sleepers; then a smoker would lay down his pipe with a sodden grunt of satisfaction, and compose himself for the blissful dreams. One man lying in a bunk near us irresistibly attracted my attention. He was, without doubt, a European, and, if I might hazard the guess, an Englishman; possibly he might have once been a gentleman, for his white face had a look of refinement about it utterly at variance with his surroundings.

In an undertone I questioned our companion regarding him. He shrugged his shoulders with a laugh, and said scornfully, 'Him? Oh! he's one of *us* Englishmen: had a University education, they say; not much use to him now, is it?'

Poor devil! If his mother could only have seen him as I saw him then, sleeping the hopeless sleep of the Black Smoke, what would she have felt? After a little while he woke, and for a few moments lay still, his eyes opening and shutting as the remaining fumes of the drug played across his brain. Then he began to move about, and finally he dragged himself out of his bunk on to his feet. Gazing round the room with a bewildered expression, his eyes fell upon us. Never, if I live to be a hundred, shall I forget the piteous look which spread across his features; it told its own story better than any words. But let us draw the curtain: we had seen enough. The rest of the night was spent in wandering through places that were revelations—places of even the recollection of which I should almost like to rid my memory.

There are slums and slums—Little Bourke Street, Melbourne; Whitechapel, London; Port Said; Calcutta; China Town, San Francisco; and Singapore: each has a reputation of its own, but surely for unadulterated misery and vice, unaccompanied by any redeeming feature whatsoever, it would be difficult to match the last named. There is a peculiar, undefinable repulsiveness about the native quarter of Singapore which baffles description. It must be seen to be appreciated.

When we reached our hotel again, daylight was not far distant ; life was returning to the city. Our guide received his reward, and we turned in to sleep away, if possible, the thoughts engendered by our awful sightseeing.

That afternoon we were fortunate enough to hear of a boat sailing the following day for British North Borneo, via the Island of Labuan. Borneo being a country we particularly desired to see, we trudged away to the wharf, and having found the vessel in question, proceeded on board and introduced ourselves to the chief officer, who as good fortune had it, chanced to be a most agreeable and sympathetic Englishman. Having heard our story, he professed himself glad to help us, said he was in want of hands, and most willingly offered us passages to the capital of British North Borneo and back, provided we would work our way. This we gladly consented to do, and accordingly next morning, having settled our bill, we once more embarked, glad, if only for a little while, to say 'good-bye' to stifling Singapore.

CHAPTER IV

*EN ROUTE TO BRITISH BORNEO—LABUAN—SANDAHKAN—
SINGAPORE—BANCA*



Of the voyage to North Borneo there is little to tell, beyond saying that it occupied in all fourteen days,

and was attended by no disastrous risks to either body or mind. Fortunately we experienced glorious weather throughout, otherwise, I fear, in spite of the profusion of gold lace on the captain's uniform and the affability of the chief engineer, our vessel would not have proved herself a good sailor. She was a loblollop old tub, as full of cussedness as a six-year-old Solomon Boy, and I believe she would have liked nothing better than to have gone to the bottom in a smooth sea, just to prove her utter contempt for things in general. Save the skipper, no one on board seemed to have any good opinion of her, but to him her grunting and groaning through the water like a broken-winded camel was as the sweetest music. He

had a pecuniary interest in her, and for that reason, I suppose, was blind to her little peculiarities.

On the third day we sighted the Sarhassen Islands, lying all lonely out on a bright blue sea; then the Natunas, dim and distant on our port bow; picked up our first view of Borneo's coast with Brunei Cliffs on the fourth, and at daybreak the following morning came to an anchor in Victoria Harbour, Labuan Island.

Never in my life do I remember anything more exquisite than that morning. The sea was as smooth as the inside of an oyster shell; the subdued green of the foliage ashore contrasted soothingly with the water in the Bay; while, across the straits, upon the mainland of Borneo, glimpses could be obtained of mountain peaks towering dimly heavenward. Before we were properly at anchor, canoes of all shapes and sizes surrounded us, piled with bananas and kadjangs (young palm leaves dried), which their occupants clamorously offered for sale. Accustomed though I was, by this time, to such things, some of the men in these canoes positively made me blush, and if I possessed the effrontery of two of our lady passengers who bargained with them, oblivious of all else, I'd stake that effrontery out, and sell it as town lots. There'd be enough for a village anyway, possibly a city.

Labuan is the most charming little toy kingdom imaginable, and though only six miles from Borneo, it has been a separate British colony for upwards of fifty years. Greatest boast of all, it is entitled to

and possesses its own postage stamp, though I doubt, if the whole island were hunted through, as many as two dozen people capable of writing their own names (to say nothing of anybody else's) could be found. As an unsophisticated young English resident put it, ' Bless you, that don't matter ; it's the bally look of the thing, you know. I reckon a man wants some bally privilege, if it's only a bally postage stamp, for living



in this bally place without cutting his bally throat. If they took that stamp away, I'm hanged if we wouldn't mutiny and strike out as a bally nation on our own bally hook,' etc. He was a sweet bally youth !

After a stay of eight hours, and when we had nearly lifted the Island out of the water with our steam whistle, we once more proceeded on our way, bound for Gaya, another small island, six hours

steam from Labuan. Observed from the sea (for, by reason of our responsible positions on board, we were afforded no opportunity of landing) Gaya is picturesquely precipitous. It is neither a big place, nor is it particularly interesting. The inhabitants are mostly Chinese and Malays, with a sprinkling of other nationalities. The Malay quarter is built on piles and perfume, at the end of a roughly constructed wooden jetty, in order, I suppose, that the inhabitants may get the benefit of the decayed fish and sea breezes. Only a Malay would like that sort of mixture.

Leaving Gaya, we steamed along the Borneo coast (keeping an eye on Kina Balu, towering his 13,000 odd feet into the clouds) as far as Sampan-mangio Point (steamers have been known to get wrecked on the mere name) which, in order to make Kudat, another quaint and evil-smelling little coastal village, we were compelled to round. Leaving Kudat a difficult bit of navigation lay before us, among flat islands, coral reefs, and horrors of a similar description, just the very place for such a tub as ours to give an exhibition of her worst qualities. During the day it rained : not showered, rained ! Forty million gallons to a square inch per minute, washed the anchor down the fo'c's'le ventilator, and cut holes the size of pigeon eggs in the brass starboard lighthouse ! Well, if it didn't quite do these things, I'll take them back ; but I assure you it came very near it. Personally I had never experienced such a deluge before.

Old Bull's-eye, the bo'sun, a cheery old sea dog, took refuge with us under the forrard awning, and

casually remarked that it reminded him of a *shower* he had been in, early in the seventies, a degree south of the Azores.

‘I was aboard a loitering old Geordie,’ he said, ‘from Newcastle, heavily loaded for the Cape. Her average speed was six knots in a fair sea, but sometimes we managed to knock seven out of her, and then the chief engineer ’ud part his hair and talk about ocean steaming. One dog watch it began to look precious black all round, clouds gathered, and the wind sighed as if it was awful lonesome out there on that great big sea. The skipper prowled up and down the bridge sniffing the air, and ended by telling the officer of the watch to have everything made snug. It was that heavy and quiet, you could hear the fishes breathin’ miles away. Then suddenly a flash of lightning came so close to us, that it singed the old man’s beard, and the clap of thunder that followed it knocked him bang up against the binnacle. After that it began to rain, not drizzle like this, but real rain, sounding for all the world like millions of marlin spikes being dashed upon the deck. The skipper guessed he was getting wet, so down he dived to the chart room for his oilskins. While he was below there came the biggest crash you ever heard, and then, for no reason that we could see, the blooming old tub began to heel over just as if she was never going to right herself again. “God a’mighty,” says the skipper to himself, clinging to the chart locker, “she’s struck somethin’, and we’re sinkin’.” Getting on to his feet he fumbled up on to the bridge,

and there, sure enough, he saw she was going down into the sea, foot by foot and inch by inch. "Stand by the boats!" he yells, but, bless you, nobody took no notice, thinkin' they might just as well be drowned in the fo'c's'le as come out to be drowned in the rain. After that there was a kind of lull, and Chips, the carpenter, crawls on to the bridge, and bellows in the skipper's ear, "She ain't sinkin'"; she's as tight as a drum, there's not a tot of water in her!"



"Then what's the meaning of that?" yells the skipper, pointing to the water. "If we're not sinkin' the sea must be risin'." And by the jumping Moses he was right! *The rain was comin' down that strong just about where we were, that it had rose the ocean ten feet, before the heavily loaded old tub could come up on it.* It's my belief, if it hadn't stopped then, it would have brought the water over the decks, and we'd

have been swamped afore we could have saved ourselves. Call this 'ere rain? Young man, don't you parade your ignorance! You don't know what real rain is!'

When he had finished, we all maintained a solemn silence. Of course we felt that, in the interests of science, somebody ought to have hinted at the fate of Ananias, but for the moment no one had sufficient presence of mind to think of it. Nevertheless it was a beautiful lie. But I'm wandering again.

Sandahkan, our destination, and the capital of British North Borneo, is admirably situated on high land at the mouth of a large natural harbour, a mile and a half across at the entrance, and running inland about fifteen miles. On the town side the view is almost imposing, but across the Bay, where the Keenabatanga River flows into the sea, nothing meets the eye save uninteresting mangrove swamps running across the flats up to the thick jungle behind.

Sandahkan is still but a very tiny place, built and existing on lines peculiarly its own. Everything connected with it is primitive in the extreme. There is nothing stuck up about it; the narrow conventionalities of western civilisation have not found their way there yet.

As we came to an anchor, one of the male European residents put off to welcome back his partner, who was returning to North Borneo after a holiday in England. Both were charming youths, and their conversation over the side, while the gangway was being rigged, gave us a better insight into

Sandahkan life, than we could have got in any other way. It was something like this :

YOUTH (*standing up in boat alongside, nodding and smiling to passenger*). ‘Hullo, Bill, so you’ve got back again!’

BILL (*whose heart yearns towards him, though, Englishman like, he dreads showing it*). ‘Yes, got back again! How are things?’

YOUTH (*alongside, laconically*). ‘Beastly! Bally roof’s fallen in, an’ Jim’s missus has got twins. The deacon’s lame, and all the fowls have got the croup! I’ve had boils, but they’re better now! How’s London!’

BILL. ‘So, so! Who’s built the new bungalow?’

YOUTH (*alongside*). ‘Paddy Dowle—he’s going to get spliced—girl from London too. Rum thing ain’t it—girl wanting to come out here—specially to Paddy? Reckon she’ll sigh for home comforts when she sees the kennel he’s prepared for her. Paddy’s fowls roost in the drawing-room y’know.’

By this time the gangway is lowered, and he climbs aboard to greet his friend with something very like tears in his eyes. ‘God bless you, old pal, I’ve been awful lonely without you,’ etc. etc. and then they descend to the saloon for the inevitable drink.

On account of the importation of coolies into Sandahkan, the Chinese element predominates, and is likely to go on doing so. The European population have their residences among the hills at the

back of the town, and peculiar little places some of them are. They seem to possess everything but what their owners most desire—an air of home.

If you want to understand something of life and death in British North Borneo, you should get a resident, between midnight and morning, to narrate to you a few of his choice fever stories; they are worth hearing. But don't do it if you're nervous, for they're ghastly enough to raise the scalp of a tarantula. The death rate among the Chinese coolies is, or used to be, something appalling. From information received, it would appear that they die off at the rate of about 20 per cent. per week. But, saving the fact that everyone is sorry for the poor planter, who has been put to no end of trouble and expense in importing them, nothing is thought of this. The general opinion is that it's just like a Chinaman to die when he's most wanted; it would appear as if his very existence is sheer cussedness.

That reminds me of a story I once heard of two young Englishmen who purchased a station somewhere in Western Queensland. They were unsophisticated youths, with big bank balances and English ways of looking at things. Among other peculiarities, they developed an intense dislike to Chinese labour in any shape or form. This led them to discharge their Chinese cook, Ah Chow, and to engage, in his place, an Englishman of by no means satisfactory character. Ah Chow they told to pack up and *git*. He explained that he didn't know his

way to the nearest township—some 150 miles distant—but that didn't matter to them, all they wanted was that he should git. He did git, only to return four or five days later in an emaciated condition, with the explanation that he had been bushed (lost) within twenty miles of the head station. Again they said 'Git!' and again he got. This time he returned in a week, still thinner, after another series of extraordinary adventures in the Unknown. Then they began to get annoyed, and sent him off for the last time, threatening all sorts of dire penalties should he return again. Next day they had a slight disagreement, embodying a charge of petty larceny, with their immaculate white man cook, who thereupon collected his goods and chattels and decamped.

Thenceforward, their affairs became extremely disorganised. They had no idea themselves how to cook, nor had they a man upon the place who could help them; at least not according to their notions of cookery. At the end of two days they began to regret their behaviour towards the heathen Chinees, and even went so far as to contemplate his return with equanimity. In fact, the worse their meals grew, the more and more anxious they became to gaze upon his sallow countenance again.

One night they heard a scrambling in the verandah. On going out they discovered Ah Chow, very, very thin, and on the borderland of death. He was too weak to stand, and a sad look came into his eyes as he explained: 'You sackee me a'longee bush, me wellee bad findee—no eatee, no drinke—

allee same die!' And without further ado he did die!

Then those two Christian young men, their eyes hovering between the dead body of Ah Chow in the doorway and a badly burnt sago pudding on the table, were annoyed! 'Ungrateful beggar!' they said, 'goes and dies out of pure contrariness, just as we were going to give him employment. It's too bad, too bad!' The fault was of course all with Ah Chow. But there, I'm wandering again!

We remained in Sandahkan two days, and on the evening of the second, hove anchor, and steamed back on our track for Singapore, arriving there after an uneventful voyage.

Our good fortune was once more in the ascendant, insomuch that we were not compelled to remain in the Lion City. As we brought up against the wharf, a vessel was getting up steam, preparatory to leaving for Batavia via Sumatra and Banca. Reflecting that if we could not, as proved to be the case, work our way down, deck passages would certainly not cost more than awaiting events at a Singapore hotel, we decided to travel by her.

Of all the clumsy old tubs upon the ocean, I am prepared to assert that she was the worst. She was as short and squab in front as a Thames hay barge, her internal arrangements were five years behind the times, and her obsolete engines had been patched up out of all recognition. On an average, once every day they were compelled to heave her to for repairs. And yet her officers carried more dignity

and natural conceit than one would have any right to expect in all Her Majesty's Admirals and Naval Aides-de-camp put together. Our quarters as deck passengers were situated under the forrard awning, among the sheep and poultry, and our companions, once again (human beings, I mean, not the sheep and poultry) embraced almost every Eastern nationality, including a troupe of Japanese actors and actresses.

We said 'good-bye' to Singapore in a tropical downpour, which outside the harbour gave place to a fog of pea-soup thickness. Now, a fog anywhere around Singapore is no laughing matter, crowded with shipping as is the highway thereabouts. So thick did the weather eventually become, that, after half an hour's steaming we were forced to heave to, keeping our steam whistle going every minute like souls in torment. In the semblance of a gigantic pall, the fog enveloped us, until it became impossible even to see half a length ahead. The silence in the intervals of whistling was most weird; not a sound could be heard save an occasional order from the bridge, and the steady drip drip of the moisture on the deck.

Now and again, intense excitement would be caused by the appearance of some vessel gliding slowly out of the surrounding obscurity, almost to within a cable's length of us, only to shift her helm, and disappear as mysteriously as she had come. The knowledge of the presence of such danger was by no means pleasant, and right glad were we when the fog lifted, and we were able to proceed upon our way once more.

The voyage from Singapore to Batavia is surpassingly beautiful. We seemed to be picking our way continually between islands each lovelier than the last. In fact, anything more perfect could not be imagined than the blue sky, the smooth sea, and



these jungle-clad heavens peering up out of it. Sand-drops in the infinite though they are, the feelings they produce are very curious. There is a wondrous sense of rest about their beauty. Gazing at them, one feels almost inclined to forsake this great garish world

and to retire to one of them, there to live a life of perfect peace and happiness, devoid of ambition and money-making cares, and relieved of all worries and miserable anxieties. And yet I suppose it wouldn't do ; it is that struggling and battling to keep one's head above water which is the very salt of our existence.

After bucketing along with an immense assumption of dignity, our first place of call was Muntuk, capital of the small island of Banca (off the coast of Sumatra), after which the straits are named. Banca is chiefly famous for its tin mines and malarial fever, and, I believe, is charming as far as scenery is concerned.

Speaking of fever reminds me that among our passengers, whom I should have mentioned earlier, was a general of the Dutch army. In the list of his possessions he numbered a small presence, a gorgeous uniform, and a title that fairly took one's breath away. He had with him about fifty of his rank and file ; poor fever-ridden wretches, returning invalided to Java from Achin. Now Achin is the northern portion of the island of Sumatra, and belongs



to a race of people rejoicing in the catarrhish name of Achinese. In an unfortunate moment, about twenty years ago, the Dutch nation, who had appropriated the southern half of Sumatra, decided to try and obtain the north, but the misguided inhabitants, having probably heard of Dutch enterprise before, settled it in their own minds to keep them out.

Pot-valiant Holland sailed in to find a wasps' nest. For the Achinese have proved stubborn fighters, and take considerable delight in terminating the existence of those unfortunates whom their trusty ally the malaria leaves alive. Out of every hundred Dutchmen landed, fully thirty go under before they have been a couple of months in the country, and in the meantime they run the risk of being blow-piped, tomahawked, or otherwise put an end to by their determined foes. This sort of guerilla warfare has now lasted twenty odd years, cost many millions of guilders, and it would be extremely difficult to say whether the invaders are any forrarder than they were at the beginning. The natural conceit of the Dutchman forbids his giving in, and in the meantime he is, I suppose, content to pay heavily for his amusement. There are pleasanter occupations than being a Dutch soldier in Achin.

CHAPTER V

BATAVIA, BUITENZORG

WE were due to arrive at Batavia two days after leaving Banca, but this happy event was delayed by a breakdown in the engine room which took something like six hours to repair.

What its nature was we were unable to discover, but from all I saw of their engineering, it is more than likely that some of that gold laced dignity got fouled in the Thrust block, and interfered with the action of the propelling shaft. Such dignity on board ship is about as dangerous as dynamite.

We obtained our first view of Java towards noon on the third day; a long, low, tree-clad coast, just discernible above sea level. About three o'clock we went through the usual pilot formalities, and steamed past the lighthouse into the small harbour of Tanjong Priok, as the seaport of Batavia is called. As we entered, clouds covered the sky, it began to rain, and

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in consequence the dirty water inside the breakwater, the slimy stone wharfs, desolate wind-tossed palm trees, and general air of cholera and sudden death, produced a picture that was the reverse of inspiring. Moreover, there were Malay boys on the wharf, and as we have said before, we dislike Malays intensely. These particular specimens were not a cheerful gang; they were ill dressed and half fed, some of them wore scarecrow uniforms, while others had only loin cloths and brass badges of gorgeous lettering and dimensions to signify that they were hotel touts. Every mother's son had something to say, and every mother's son pestered you with his attentions until he was allowed an opportunity of saying it. We had lost our angelic temper earlier in the day, and in consequence were not in the humour to be trifled with. We had hazy ideas of presenting the skeletons of those we slew to the British Museum, labelled 'Malay Hotel Touts,' but were induced to abandon the notion when we considered the question of freight. Who would pay freight on a dead Malay?

We had been given to understand that the Dutch Government is particularly severe on smuggling, so as we had nothing we wanted to get in, we were ready, nay, even ostentatiously anxious, to have our things examined, and to receive praise for our enforced honesty. I notice this is often the way with folk who have no option but to be law-abiding. Whether they are so scrupulously honest when temptation and opportunity come their way, is another matter.

The work of overhauling passengers' baggage is carried on by Malays under the superintendence of a gorgeously attired Customs officer who sits near, keeping up the dignity of Dutch character. That's just the sort of occupation to suit a Java Dutchman : he'll keep up his dignity when everything else is gone. What I want to know is what he does with it when he goes to bed. As it's the most precious article he's got, surely he doesn't leave it lying about promiscuously with his clothes? Perhaps he—— But there, I am wandering again.

The customs building is an unpretentious shed about as large as a sixth-rate country chapel. The comfort of the public is not considered at all, the reason being, I presume, that the public who require comfort do not go to Java. Having safely passed our baggage and convinced the authorities that shaving soap was not dynamite, nor a collar box an infernal machine, we wandered through the gates to the railway station, whence a train runs at long intervals to Batavia. For the benefit of future travellers in Java, let me here narrate a little incident that occurred at this station : an incident which will go a long way towards showing the peculiar customs of the country, and the love of Javanese Dutchmen for strangers, and Englishmen in particular.

Before asking at the booking office for a ticket to Batavia, we took the precaution to examine a printed notice posted on the wall. This notice informed the public that fares to Batavia were half a guilder or 10*d.* each. Accordingly, approaching the

window, we demanded tickets and placed the amount stated on the counter. The Chinese clerk, with a quickness that betrayed continual practice of the little game, took our measures, and pushed the money back, signifying on his fingers that it was not enough, that he wanted a whole guilder apiece, *or in other words, twice the proper fare*; and this, for the reason that we were Englishmen or foreigners.

We remonstrated, pointing to the notice, but all in vain; he shrugged his shoulders and declined to give us a ticket. Whereupon, fearing we might be betrayed into slaying him, we sought the gorgeously liveried station-master, and placed the matter, as well as we could, before him. He also saw our nationality, and shrugging his shoulders, turned upon his heel.



The train was just on the point of starting, and as it was the last that day, it remained for us either to pay the amount demanded, or to camp where we were till morning. Eventually, with a hurricane of grumbling and ill-humour, to which we added our prayers for the welfare of the Dutch Government, the station-master, and his clerk, we paid and got aboard. This is a solid, cold-drawn, unsophisticated fact!

The journey from Tanjong Priok to the capital occupies about half-an-hour, and is extremely uninteresting. The road lies through green, slimy

swamps, unwholesome native villages, and eye-wearing canals. Along these latter crawl native barges, wonderful constructions built of filth and bamboo.

We had decided to honour the Hôtel des Indes (to which we had been recommended) with our disastrous patronage. So, on arriving at Batavia, having called two small *dos-à-dos* carts (one for ourselves and one for our luggage) we started. These conveyances are drawn by ponies about the size of Shetlands, and are driven by Malay boys. When the cart has a good weight behind, the pony finds all his time taken up trying to remain on *terra firma*.

It had been raining copiously and the roads were covered with a thick black slush. Because we were arrayed in clean white suits and spotless pith helmets, and were conscious that our arrival at the Hôtel des Indes would provoke excitement, we told our driver, in a language he did not understand, to drive slowly, and on no account to bring the mud between the wind and our nobility.

In spite of our precautions, however, a few spots flicked in upon us as we clattered out of the station yard. We said it was annoying, and hoped it would not occur again. Trying to wipe it off we made it worse. Then it began to shower in in wholesale quantities. We expostulated with our driver, but he only grinned vacantly and took no notice. It grew worse. It literally poured in upon us, under and over, round every corner, and through every crevice, until we were covered and exasperated from head

to foot. Then a thunderstorm took a hand in the game, and in three minutes we were drenched through and through. Being decently brought up young men, with Christian tempers, we restrained ourselves; but when the mud, rain, perspiration, and annoyance got into our helmets, and started the green lining running down our foreheads and round the back of our ears, the tension was too great and we gave way. By the time we entered the Hôtel des Indes, on the verandahs of which we could see many young and well favoured ladies partaking of afternoon tea, we were not conceited about our appearances. Thus, *costume* makes cowards of us all.

The Hôtel des Indes is of peculiar construction, being built in the form of a square, the centre of which is a garden. On two sides of this, and fronting two sides of the square, are long verandahed corridors of sitting-rooms and bedrooms. The main street forms the third side, while an imposing marble dining saloon, with the servants' offices, kitchens and stables, makes up the fourth. The whole effect is curious, but by no means displeasing. The servants are invariably Malays, and are the most idle, loafing, vicious specimens of an idle, loafing, and vicious race. Of one member of the brotherhood I shall have more to say anon!

Now, when we are strangers in strange countries, we always regard it as our duty to criticise the manners and customs of the regions into which we drift in true British fashion, finding fault with what does not suit us, and discounting that of which we

cannot help but approve. Let us consider one Batavian custom.

Previous to dinner it is the habit in Java to assemble in the verandah of the dining hall, to discuss the doings of the day and to whet the appetite with small drinks, composed of gin and a sort of Angostura bitters. This compound is served free of cost, and is one of the only customs worthy of favourable comment.

During dinner we heard that a magnificent free concert was to be held that evening in the Military Gardens. With that promptness which ever distinguishes our actions (when entertainments were free) we decided to attend it. Accordingly, about nine o'clock, having suitably attired ourselves, we called a gharry, and desired to be driven to the festive scene. All Batavia, fashionable and otherwise, appeared to be making in the same direction, and the beauty of the night, it was full moon, was in itself an excuse for the frivolity.

After a short drive our carriage drew up before a pair of imposing gates, the entrance to lamplit gardens of fairy-like beauty. In the centre of these gardens stood a magnificent marble mansion, and towards this we wended our way.

On entering we found ourselves in a spacious hall, filled with ladies and gentlemen, Malay waiters, small tables and chairs. A fine military band was performing at one end, and to quote an eminent writer, everything and everybody was as merry as a marriage bell. After a little hunting we discovered

a vacant table, seated ourselves, and bade a boy bring us some wine. Sipping it, we listened to the music and criticised our neighbours with considerable point and freedom in the security of our own language. When we had seen and heard enough, we departed, convinced that we had conferred an honour upon the Dutch nation, of which it (the Dutch nation) might justly be proud. It was not until next day that we learnt that nine out of every ten Java Dutchmen have a perfect knowledge of English, and that while we, thinking ourselves so omnipotent in our English exclusiveness, had been showing off before strangers, we had, in reality, been uninvited intruders upon a private club. Why we had not been fired out neck and crop will ever pass my understanding. We had our punishment, however. We were the cheapest couple in Java that day, I can assure you! We could have been purchased for less than cost price, with even then a substantial discount for cash!

In the course of the afternoon, our pride received another shock, for not only was it unmistakably borne in upon us that our countrymen's presence was not appreciated in Java, but beyond that, if we ourselves desired to remain more than twenty-four hours in the island, we must apply, humbly, for permission so to do, attending at the Government office, and answering any questions that might be put to us. What was worse we should be compelled to pay dearly for the privilege conceded. Should we desire to remain for more than one month, we must be prepared to serve a

lengthy period in the black and tan militia regiments of the island. This being so, the following morning, we secured an interpreter, a Yankee sea captain, who professed to understand Dutch and attended at the office. Our companion was full of his own importance, and was going to fix things up for us right away. 'We needn't bother,' he said, 'but were just to sit tight and leave everything to him.'

The office was a peculiarly dirty hole, and the official in charge more than matched it.

When we entered, he was spoiling a clean piece of paper under the pretence of writing, and gazed up at us with a vacant stare. It was not until after our companion had shouted something incomprehensible at him for fully five minutes, in a voice like a saw sharpener crossed with a steam fog-horn, that he began to acquire some distant glimmering of the reason for our presence there. Then taking from a shelf a bulky volume, he prepared to start interrogations, and the dialogue proceeded somewhat as follows :

OFFICIAL (*a long sentence hopelessly unintelligible*).

INTERPRETER (*losing the thread of it*). 'Vast heaving! Have another try! Put your helm over, mate, and go upon another tack,' etc. etc.

OFFICIAL (*a still longer sentence delivered in one breath*).

INTERPRETER (*with a grin like a horse collar*). 'Ah! I reckon I've located him now—wants to know your names, where you come from, and what you blamed well want here!'

We furnish the requisite information and the official begins again, but is immediately interrupted.

INTERPRETER. 'Dog gone my cats! he's got a tongue like a blank paddle boat. Let up and have another try, blank you!'

OFFICIAL (*warming to his work and saying twice as much in half the time*).

INTERPRETER (*beginning to get fogged*). 'Back her! Back her all you know. I'm clean out of soundings!'

OFFICIAL (*shouting and gesticulating wildly, and throwing away his greasy spectacles to allow his features better play*).

INTERPRETER (*losing his temper, at the top of his voice*). 'Stop! stop! stop! blank—blank—double blank. Ain't yer never going to let me have a deal. Want all the talking to yerself, do yer? (*Goes at it himself for a space; then with an air of conviction*) I've got it. Wants to know how many times you have been in gaol, and if you've got the measles or small-pox?'

We feel distrustful, but answer in the negative. Evidently something is wrong, for they begin again.

INTERPRETER (*after a minute's anxious thought*). 'Lord! what a simple thing, to be sure. Wants to know how many times you've been married. No? Wants certificate of your births. No? Wants to savee your vaccination marks. No? Your Sunday school papers. No? Well, may I be hanged for a pink-eyed beachcomber if I know what he does want anyhow!'

This being just the conclusion we have long since come to, we start in on our own account, and have

everything satisfactorily settled in less than two minutes. Next time we want papers taken out we'll deny ourselves the luxury of an interpreter. I'm not saying anything against interpreters, mind you, but I do think it is necessary that they should understand *something* about the language.

Among the many things which must strike new arrivals in Java as peculiar is the dress of the residents, before and after the business of the day. Of course one soon sees that it is just what is wanted for the climate, but even with that excuse it is—well—peculiar! The man's dress consists of a loose, white Chinese jumper, called a *kabia*, somewhat resembling a small English smock-frock, a pair of gaily patterned trousers (or a sarong) and Chinese grass slippers. The Dutch lady, if she desires to be in the fashion, lets her hair down, wears a short lawn peignoir, a sarong (sheet of native cloth) loosely wound round the hips and tucked in at the side, thrusts her bare feet into dainty slippers, and almost invariably carries a fan. Attired in this fashion, men and women sit together in the verandah, sip tea, smoke, and talk the polite chit-chat of the day, undisturbed by any thought of appearances. But until the new comer gets used to it, it makes him, to say the very least of it, uncomfortably modest.

There were two young Dutch ladies, with whose charms we were much impressed, residing at number 23 on our verandah. Every afternoon at five o'clock they attired themselves after the fashion I have just described, and with much fluttering of

fans and clattering of tiny shoe heels, proceeded past our chairs on their way to the bath. We were filled with admiration, and on the strength of their appearances purchased sarongs and kabias for ourselves, declaring that the following afternoon should see us correspondingly attired. Accordingly, after our walk next day, we retired to our respective rooms to don our war paint.

The kabia is easily put on; not so the sarong. But as I had carefully studied the manner of fastening it from every person I had seen wearing one, I felt sure I could manage it. I did not know that it is a deep and a designing garment, expressly meant to compass the fall of man. I was to learn that later!

Removing my nether garments, I unrolled the cloth and twisted it round my legs, to discover that the pattern was not straight. I started again; but this time I had it too much on one side, and it would not tuck in. I sat down to think it over. Of course in a second I saw my mistake and began again; but this time it wouldn't work at all. It fell down ignominiously, and I said the first thing that occurred to me. Once more I thought it out.

Naturally I saw my mistake directly; it was as clear as noonday. Instead of beginning on the left, I should have begun on the right, twisted it over and *then* tucked it in. I tried and failed. In front it was excellent, but behind it was impossible; my legs were exposed to the vulgar gaze. Six times I tried and six times I failed; then, kicking the offend-

ing garment into a corner, I marshalled my feelings and expressed myself as became the situation.

Remembering the old maxim 'Try, try, try again,' I recovered the cloth, made another attempt, and after half-a-dozen failures, achieved a fairly successful garment. Thrusting my feet into a pair of slippers, I sought the Long'un. I found him standing in the centre of his room, in the likeness of our father Adam before the fall. There was an expression on his face I had never seen there before. He was angry.

In response to my question, he waved a crumpled dish-clout in my face and said with untranslatable scorn :

'What's wrong? Why this bally thing's wrong! I thought I knew how to put it on, but I've tried and tried, this way and that, till I'm just black in the face. Do you believe I can get it right? No, nor within three feet of it. It isn't manufactured right! It's my belief it's a fraud!'

'Let me show you!' I said. 'Don't lose your temper with an unoffending cloth! It's as easy as falling off a log. See! first you turn this over—so! Then that over—so. No! that's not right either. Ah! I see—this back, so! No! Confound the thing—this way? No! Like this? No! Over here? No! Oh, hang the thing. How is it? Never mind, I'll undo mine, and then you can see for yourself.'

I undid it, and with shame be it written, try how I would, couldn't do it up again. After that, for ten minutes that room was just sulphurous. I say sulphurous, because it's the only term that expresses

it. When we did get them right we were hot and cross, and our pleasure for the afternoon was completely spoilt. Now you know why I say the sarong is a designing garment.

After the bath and afternoon tea, European habiliments are donned, and the fashionable world betakes itself for a walk or drive as the case may be. The men, great dandies, in fashions patriarchal elsewhere, always promenade at this hour, bare-headed. The cool of the evening is delightful, and when the band plays on the King's Plain, the scene is not only animated but most enjoyable. The



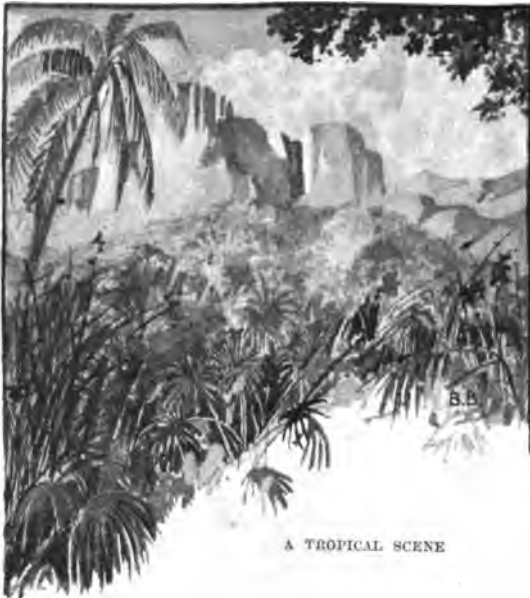
DUTCHMAN RIDING

elegant landaus of the *élite*, drawn by diminutive ponies and driven by Malays, parade up and down (the coachmen wear their livery boxers above their turbans in a most comical

fashion); horsemen trot in stately circles round and round the band, while small nigger boys, of all colours and sizes, survey the scene with unimaginable awe.

The day following our adventure with the Government official and the passport was dedicated to visiting Buitenzorg—the sanatorium of Batavia, a lovely spot, located among the mountains about forty miles inland. Once again we trusted ourselves to a colonial railroad, and once again, as in Colombo, our track followed a long panorama of exquisite

views. Dutch railways are well built, somewhat after the Yankee fashion, but the pace of the train was, if anything, slower than that of our Kandyan journey. However, we did not mind that much, the prospect from the carriage windows compensated for everything. Continually coming into view were mountain peaks and gently swelling hills, tiny water-



falls and crystal rivulets, with here and there a glimpse of the blue sea, many hundred feet below, just showing through exquisite settings of cocoa palms, bananas, custard and bread-fruit trees. Nor was this all, for as we approached our destination, we could see, peering down on us from among the clouds, the two mountain guardians of Buitenzorg, Salahk and twin-headed Pangerange and Gede.

Arriving at our destination, we refreshed ourselves, and then sought the Botanic Gardens which surround the summer residence of the governor of the colony. It would be impossible to conceive anything more beautiful than these gardens, and I can quite believe the Dutchmen's boast to be correct, when they assert that they are the finest in the world. Even those of Peredenya sink into insignificance beside them. Surely, never save in the garden of Eden could vegetation flourish as it does here. The sights, the sounds, and the perfumes, are lovely beyond compare. Beautiful vistas, seemingly endless, lead the visitor down to the bubbling, dashing stream which marks the boundary of the garden. Avenues of palms, bananas, and kanarie trees draw him thence from beautiful spot to still more beautiful spot, while up above him towers Salahk mountain, eight thousand feet into the sky, a strange yet fitting contrast to all this loveliness below.

Here also may be seen the tomb of Lady Stamford Raffles, the wife of Java's only English governor, who died in Buitenzorg in 1814. I doubt if a more peaceful spot for a resting place, could be discovered in the world. Surely it would be even worth dying in Java to secure one like it.

Next morning, by the early train, we returned to Batavia, bidding a reluctant farewell to sweet Buitenzorg and old Salahk in mid heaven, shrouded in his veil of mist.

After what we had so lately left, even Batavia, with her lavish colouring, looked almost poor and

insignificant; and yet there is much that is worth seeing in Batavia. (I mean things on the outside of the tourist line.) For instance, there are quarters in the Calli Bazaar which would well repay the trouble of a visit; quarters where few Englishmen have been, and where men live who have endless stories of life and death to tell! There are to be found Chinese joss houses, opium dens, fan-tan shops, and queer corners of every kind; all of absorbing fascination, and each with a new yarn for him who has the wit to understand.

We explore and explore, and as we do the days slip by, till our supply of money runs so short that it behoves us to be moving on again. Once more we hold a council meeting, and go into the question thoroughly. The result is less satisfactory than it has ever been before. We discover that it will be absolutely necessary for us to find a large sum before it will even be possible to think of leaving the island. How to raise this amount is a reflection which causes us ever increasing concern. There is only one way. All things negotiable must be put into the common pool—watches, chains, jewellery, and clothes; and whatever is saleable must be sold. But who will buy? This is another puzzle, but eventually we solve it. Chinese hawkers are continually peddling their wares up and down the verandahs of the hotel; we must try them. This is accordingly done, an opportunity



being seized during the time the rest of the hotel is enjoying its siesta. A Chinaman never wants a sleep when he sees a chance of doing business, and one long-pigtailed rascal sits under a tree in the garden watching us. We beckon him over, and put the question to him. He expresses himself willing to trade.

Going on the plan that it is bad policy to lead trumps first, we begin with two pairs of trousers, which, though well worn, are still presentable. After a little haggling, they bring two guilders, or equal to three and fourpence. What use they can be to him, seeing he doesn't wear trousers, I cannot understand. A shooting coat follows, with a silk handkerchief thrown in to make a bargain. A whole suit succeeds the shooting coat, and a nearly new Inverness cape the suit. By the time these sales are concluded, folk are beginning to reappear in the verandahs, and we shut up shop until the morrow, having realised eighteen guilders, or equivalent to thirty shillings, by our exertions.

Next day, as soon as siesta time comes round, we resume our barter, passing from wardrobes to jewellery. The fun grows fast and furious, and after haggling like old Jew tradesmen for nearly two hours, at closing time we have disposed of two good watches and one chain, for a sum, in guilders, equivalent to four pounds eighteen shillings. Affairs are looking up!

Next afternoon an amusing incident occurs. The story of our sales has leaked out, and one or two other Chinamen with keen eyes to business chance

along. To meet a long felt want, we parade a gold chain worth about six pounds, if only for its gold. It passes from hand to hand. The bidding commences, and gradually works up to perhaps a quarter of the value of its weight. Then it begins to flag, and we spur them on till it reaches about half the amount we are disposed to take. At this point, two Chinamen retire to consult, eventually returning with another offer, which, however, we decline. All this time, among the bidders, is one little pock-marked Celestial, who has been suffering agonies of desire for it. A look of intense longing is in his eyes, and marking this, we bring all our powers of persuasion to bear upon him. At last he can resist no longer, and rises like a greedy trout to the price we want, stipulating that he must first be allowed to take it down to some superior Chinaman in the town, in order that its metal may be tested. This at first we are disinclined to permit, but when he offers to leave his packs of merchandise with us as security for his return, we are induced to reconsider our decision. Dragging his wares into the Long'un's sitting-room, we agree to his request, making the stipulation that I am allowed to go with him. This, in his turn, he is not disposed to allow, on the excuse that it would not do for a white man to be seen where he is going. But we are adamant, and eventually, leaving the Long'un mounting guard over the security, I set off with him.

Our route is a devious one. We wind in and out of highways and byways, cross canals and thread

evil-smelling courts, till I am bewildered beyond measure. At length we stop, turn to the right, and ascend to the top of as ramshackle an old Dutch dwelling as the mind can conceive. The house, from garret to cellar, is alive with Chinamen, each of whom seems to be filled with an intense desire to know what I am doing there. They interrogate my companion, but he is a man of business, and has no time to waste on idle gossip. Beckoning me to follow him, he scuds up the stairs and disappears into a room on the right, closing the door behind him. I attempt to follow, but the door is barred in my face. After waiting five minutes I begin to think I've been trapped—but no—the door opens and I am invited to enter.

It is only a little room, but it is filled chock-a-block with Chinamen. As I show myself, an old fellow pushes his way through the crowd, and comes towards me, jabbering incessantly. Under my careful supervision, he examines, tests, and weighs the chain, and evidently gives my companion considerable advice thereon. At the end of his harangue I am allowed to understand that the bargain is completed. The old fellow, who is undoubtedly a man of considerable importance, counts out the sum in guilders, and I prepare to receive it. But this is by no means suited to the Celestial mind. There are the cases, and the amount of the purchase cannot be paid over until they are found intact. We return to the hotel.

Once there, the boxes are recovered and carefully examined, and not till then is the price of the chain

handed over. When it is, we are the richer by four pounds five shillings, making a total sum of ten pounds thirteen. Next day, our studs and rings bring us in another fifty shillings, and this done, we are in a position to meet our engagements in Java, and proceed upon our way.

A boat is expected in a few days from Colombo to coal, *en route* for Thursday Island. We book passages by her, and begin to feel that we are at length nearing our destination.

Earlier in the chapter I promised a reference to Malay servants. I give it now, and in the giving beg to be allowed to say that I know what I'm talking about.

First and foremost, the Malay may be summed up in a very few words: he is idle, slovenly, and hopelessly immoral. In spite of any personal inconvenience it might cause him, he would rather deceive you than not. He detests work, and he prefers sitting on your doorstep, expectorating designs on the pavement, to earning any number of guilders by honest labour. His duties as chambermaid are insults to your common sense. He doesn't make your bed because your bed doesn't require making: he simply punches the pillow into shape, and slaps the mattress; then he empties your basin out of the window, regardless of passers-by, wipes the dust off your boots on your best pair of trousers, and if he takes anything away to brush, nine times out of ten fails to bring it back. If asked for it, he swears by all his heathen gods he never saw it. That's the Malay all over!

Early on the Saturday following our Chinese experience, our boat was signalled, and as on this occasion we were to be first class passengers (the only class carried), we had no desire to run the risk of missing her. Accordingly, paying our bill, and collecting what was left of our baggage, we hired two carts and proceeded to the railway station, *en route* for the port. Half an hour later we were on board, and before sundown were steaming out of the harbour. Java was a thing of the past.

CHAPTER VI

THE JAVA AND ARAFURA SEAS—THE YAHUDI—TORRES STRAITS—THURSDAY ISLAND—NEW GUINEA—PEARL DIVING



THE voyage from Batavia to Thursday Island is one long succession of exquisite pictures. The sky is almost invariably blue, the

air soft and warm, while the sea strikes one as becoming every day more and more transparent and calm. On either hand a succession of lovely islands, tropical and in many cases volcanic, rise from the water, as if for the sole purpose of lending variety and interest to the voyage. At a distance they appear to be very similar, but on nearer approach we find in each some peculiar beauty the others seem to lack. They are, for the most part, the property of the Dutch, and in many instances prove themselves lucrative possessions. We pick them up one by one, only to leave them behind again—Bali, Lombok, Sumbawa, Flores, Adenara, Lomblem, Ombay, and Wetter.

We are not a large party in the saloon, but, as the old lady said of the mosquito bite, what there is is interesting. One man, connected with some mysterious branch of commerce, tells us that his father was a French Jew, his mother a Portugee, while he himself was born in Japan. For certain reasons we designate him the Yahudi, and the name fits him like a glove.

Another, an Australian gold miner, is returning home from a mining venture on the Malay Peninsula. His four companions had been murdered in a native rising, and he himself only escaped death by the skin of his teeth. Him, on account of his birthplace, we call 'Gympie.' There is also a Yankee drummer, who has, as he expresses it, peddled his wares in every town, large or small, throughout the known world, and who can, without stopping to think, reel off the names of the best hotels, and the most interesting people to call upon, in each. Another is a German count, presumably down on his luck, who is visiting Queensland with the idea of retrieving his fortunes by some means best known to himself.

The Yahudi is a perambulating nuisance. Before the voyage is half over, his presence is voted decidedly objectionable. He is selfish and egotistical to an abominable degree. He persists in monopolising the conversation at meal-times with outrageous and improbable stories, of which he himself is invariably the hero. At the same time it is only just to him to say that he flatly contradicts every asser-



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STEAMING BETWEEN ISLANDS

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tion made by anyone else. The following is a fair sample of his style of fiction.

The conversation turns on the power of animals to make their wants understood in moments of danger or excitement. Says the Yahudi, craning his long neck round to see that everyone within half a mile is listening, and interrupting one of my choicest anecdotes, which, I am led to believe, I tell with considerable success :—‘That recalls to my mind a singular adventure in Japan. One day, accompanied only by my dog, I was enjoying a morning’s shooting, when I noticed a fine cluster of ducks upon a neighbouring lagoon. To reach them without attracting attention was a difficult matter, for, barring a tree and a monster log some eighty yards to its right, there was no cover of any sort to be seen. Creeping warily along, I gained the shelter of the tree, and thence proceeded to wriggle myself under cover of the log. Once there, I took careful aim, fired both barrels, and brought down eight duck, two teal, a snipe, and a woodpigeon; but imagine my astonishment, when the smoke cleared away, at seeing the log, behind which I was crouching, rise up, wheel slowly round, and look me in the face. You may stare, gentlemen, but you cannot stare away the fact that it was an alligator, *thirty-five feet long and four feet through*, with a mouth like the entrance to the Bottomless Pit, yawning in my face. I took one good look at him, then went for the tree at express rate, leaving my gun behind me—not that, mind you, I had any fault to find with the gun, but

because my mind was so set upon reaching the tree, that I had no time to think of other things. With the noise of a steam roller, the alligator came behind me, and we took our places—he at the bottom of the tree, I at the top. It was a moment of intense excitement, and I assure you that his conversation was as clear to me as noonday.

“Good morning!” he began. “You seem to have had an excellent day’s sport. Pray come down and let me assist you in collecting your bag!”

“I thank you,” was my reply, at the same time taking a tighter grasp of my situation, as I noticed, with modesty, the appetite the sight of my legs was occasioning him, “but at present I am too much entranced with the beauty of the landscape around me, to care much for fame as a sportsman. Pray collect and accept my game yourself!”

‘This affability on my part caused him to betray his real feelings.

“Many thanks,” he replied, “but wild duck requires too much hanging for my taste. Your legs, now—but there, do pray come down.” So saying, he opened his mouth and yawned till I could plainly see the undigested boots and celluloid collar of his last victim. After that we both felt that nothing further could pass between us.

‘Look me in the face, ladies and gentlemen, if you please. I assure you that for no less than eighteen hours I remained in that uncomfortable position, clinging to that branch, with the alligator’s mouth yawning like a gravel pit beneath

me. You will ask why I did not shoot him. I reply, because my gun was on the plain, and my cartridges were in my pouch, and my pouch was with my faithful dog, and my faithful dog was in the interior of the alligator. Eighteen hours, nineteen hours, and even twenty hours went by, and still no chance of escape presented itself. I began to be annoyed, for my hunger was excruciating. At last a brilliant idea flashed through my brain.

‘Noticing that the alligator snapped ravenously at everything I threw to him, without pausing to ascertain its form or flavour, I produced my knife, and cut from the tree a stout stake, some three feet long. This I sharply pointed and notched at both ends. Then, judging my distance, I dropped it towards his mouth. As I expected, his ponderous jaws opened and closed on it perpendicularly. The result was all I could desire.

‘The force with which he closed his jaws drove one point through the roof of his mouth, the other through his tongue and out under his lower jaw. The notches prevented it from slipping back ; he was transfixed and harmless. Descending from the tree, I bade him an affectionate adieu, and went home to bed, reflecting that man’s ingenuity is often more than a match for mere brute strength, while old Father Stick is still sufficient to satisfy the most enormous appetite.’

That was the Yahudi’s style exactly. As Gympie plaintively remarked in the smoking-room afterwards, ‘You may take it from me, that Yahudi’s just no more

nor less than a fair cataclysm of a liar?' Personally, I felt that even 'cataclysm' was hardly strong enough. But to return to my log-book.

Away to port lies Macassar, the wholesale warehouse of the Archipelago, whence are disseminated all the peculiar luxuries of the civilised West, and to which comes in return all the produce of the barbarous East. Bêche de mer, trepang, beeswax, nutmegs, sandalwood, mussoi-bark, mother of pearl, tortoise-shell, birds of paradise skins—all find their way to the traders of Macassar.

Shipping of all sorts and sizes, from lordly warships to top-heavy native prahus and tiny sampans, is to be met with in these waters. The distances the latter do are almost incredible, and it is wonderful, considering the seas they must at times encounter, that more of them do not find watery graves. Now and again mysterious schooners may be seen slinking stealthily round the headlands, and, our captain observing them, becomes mysterious on the subject of illicit pearl-fishing among these islands. We cross question him in vain, his only answer is a wink and the sly remark, 'If you stay in Thursday Island, you'll find out soon enough.' We begin to feel important.

Leaving Timor and the smaller islands thereabouts, we enter the Arafura Sea, and prepare ourselves to sight no more land till we pick up the islands in Torres Straits: a period of about five days.

Early on the morning of the sixth, with a big sea running, we catch a glimpse of Booby Island right ahead of us, surmounted by its lighthouse and en-

compassed by dashing breakers. Another hour-and-a-half's steaming brings us abreast of Prince of Wales Island, the largest of the Torres Strait group, and here we pick up our pilot. We notice that the whaleboat which brings him off is manned by Manilla boys (the bull is unintentional), pleasant young fellows of fair height, possessing light brown skins and very expressive features. They have the reputation of making excellent sailors.

The approach to Thursday Island, which, though the richest, is one of the smallest of the Torres Straits group, is charming. Hilly, attractive islands form an effective background to it, while the white roofs of pearling stations, peeping from amid dense masses of dark green foliage, the deep blue of the sea, and the varicoloured sails of the luggers and other small craft which dot it, all help to enhance the beauty of the picture.

Turning the corner of Prince of Wales Island, we find ourselves facing Port Kennedy, the capital of—and, in fact, the only town in—the group. The Government Residency stands boldly in the foreground, the Union Jack waving on the flagstaff. Saluting the flag with a gun, we enter the harbour and come to an anchor in the small bay immediately opposite the township.

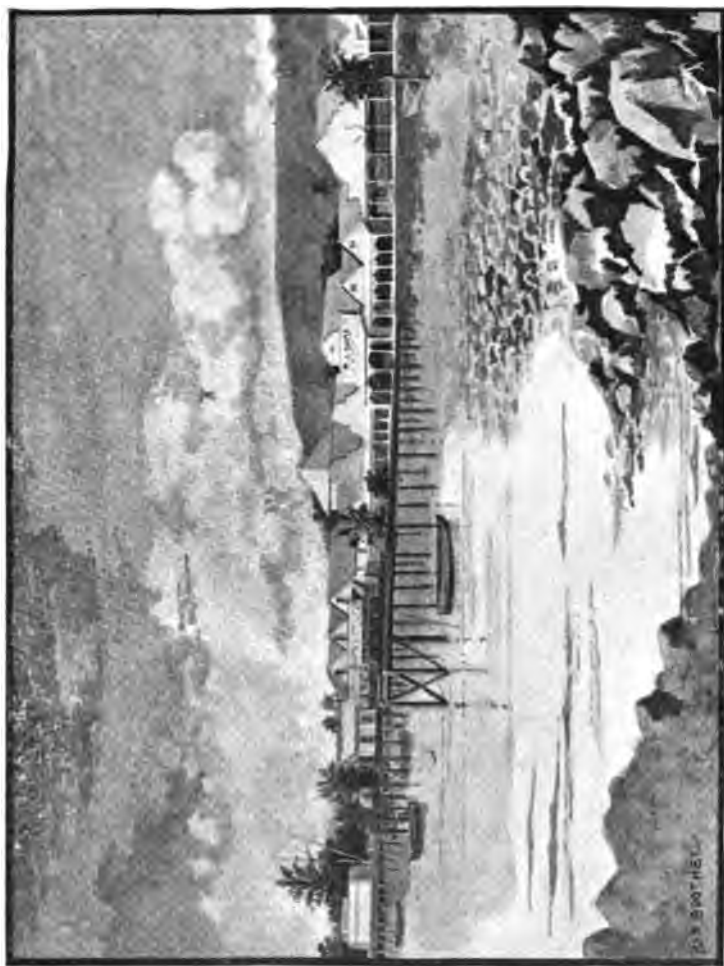
Looked at from the sea, Port Kennedy is peculiarly Australian. The houses are of matchboard, built on short thick piles; and here we renew our acquaintance with galvanised iron roofs, which have a particularly ugly look after the picturesque tiles of the East.

No sooner are we at anchor than our decks are covered with strangers of all descriptions. Arabs, Chinese, Cinghalese, Japanese etc. clamber over the side, everyone with something to sell, and everyone with a tremendous amount to say. We explain emphatically, even with threats of murder, that we have no money; that if we had, we shouldn't want to see their goods, and further still, if by any chance we *did see*, nothing on earth could possibly induce us to buy them. They marvel and depart: a tourist who doesn't want to look, much less to buy, seems past their comprehension; they shake their heads ominously for our future.

After tiffin, having collected our baggage and declined the Yahudi's invitation to remain while he told the story of his uncle and the Japanese pig, we said good-bye to our friends on board, and departed ashore to seek our fortunes.

Landing on a rough wooden jetty, the services of the only cab on the island were secured, and with much state we proceeded to the Grand Hotel, which I may here remark is worthy of its name. It is indeed Grand, and its proprietress is not the least grand part of it. Folk who know her call her the Queen of Thursday Island, and we can cordially endorse the sentiment which prompts it; to her care and attention we owe more than we can ever repay. There are four or five other hotels on the island, but the Grand is the only one worthy of the name.

Our bedroom was situated upstairs on a broad verandah, and commanded a lovely view of the



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harbour and Prince of Wales Island opposite. What familiar scenes the mention of this verandah recalls to my mind. It was a favourite meeting place of Kennedyytes, and I can conscientiously affirm that I have heard more tall yarns and seen more mixed liquors drunk inside its railings, than I've seen or heard in any other two verandahs in the wide, wide world. There the pearling skippers and mail-boat pilots do mostly congregate, and it is not good for a man whose head is softer than a jarrah block to be of the company.

The population of Thursday and adjacent islands is about 1,067, comprising representatives of pretty nearly every nationality under the sun, even to a poor solitary North-American Indian, marooned there by a travelling circus

company some five years ago. Directly or indirectly the inhabitants are all dependent on the pearl shell, bêche de mer, and tortoise-shell industries; and some idea of the importance of the place may be obtained when I say that in 1892 (the year in which we were there) the exports were valued at no less than 118,222/.,



AN INHABITANT

including something like 20,000*l.* for guano from Raine Island, a tiny spot tucked away on the fringe of the Great Barrier Reef.

The government is administered by a Government Resident dependent on Queensland legislature. His duties are multifarious and his district is an exceedingly large one. He is a sort of Thursday Island 'Ko-Ko,' being an Honourable, an ex-Minister of the Crown, Government Resident, police magistrate, collector of customs, registrar of births, deaths, and marriages, harbour master, &c., all rolled into one. He also finds time to be a very good fellow!

As in so many of the other places we had visited, the Chinese element is well represented, one block of stores being almost entirely their property. Papuans, Fijians, Manilla, and Solomon boys are also very much *en évidence*.

Though a good many pearling luggers were still in the harbour when we arrived, the majority of the fleet had put back to sea, after the New Year's festivities, during which time the island had been a place of considerable mirth. Not unfrequently, these little jollifications terminate uproariously, sometimes even with blood-letting, though any very serious trouble has not occurred within the past five years.

Three or four years ago a number of natives clubbed together and purchased tickets in one of the large Melbourne Cup Sweeps. As they didn't expect much to come of it, their delight may be imagined when it became known that they had drawn the

winning horse and a prize of something like 30,000*l*. The amount fairly staggered them, and, puzzled to know what to do with it, they erected billiard saloons all over the town. That is why at every turn one is confronted with the sign, 'Johnny Calcutta, Billiard Saloon Proprietor'; 'Rhotoma Tommy—Billiards and Pyramids,' &c. When the pearly fleet is in harbour these saloons prove lucrative possessions. And, while I am about it, let me remark that some of the signs in Thursday Island are the funniest I have seen anywhere. One, if I remember rightly, ran somewhat as follows :

Tommy Bombay,

Tonsorial Artist. Barbering and Hair-cutting 6d.

D.V. Coins cut here.

For many days we paraded the settlement, familiarising ourselves with the life around us, but all the time keeping a sharp look-out for opportunities of employment. Had it not been for the anxiety our impoverished position caused us, it would have been vastly pleasant, for there was plenty to be seen.

I think were I asked to name one place in this world where fascinating people may be met with, I should declare for Thursday Island. Strange folk, whose proper homes should be between the cardboard covers of story books, are to be seen at every turn, playing billiards in the saloons, drinking in the grog shanties, or busily engaged on beautiful and mysterious vessels at anchor in the harbour : men with stories so fascinating, that we cannot

doubt their probability ; 'varsity' and public school men, dead to the world ; vagabond heirs to great names ; romantic nobodies, and the riff-raff of all humanity, working, gambling, feasting or starving, as the case may be. There are Jesuit fathers in the priest's house on the hill side, whose tales would have the same effect as curl papers ; and when the missionary schooner comes in from New Guinea she not unfrequently brings with her one or two gaunt, haggard, fever-laden wretches whose stories are almost too strange, weird, and wonderful for credence.

Thursday Island being a pearling centre, there seems to be a tourist impression that it is always possible, during the time the mail-boat remains in harbour, to obtain from the natives first-rate pearls at sixth-rate prices. For this reason every idle, disorderly nigger, loafing edgeways through the sunshine, is supposed to have in his possession pearls of fabulous worth, of which ignorance alone prevents his knowing the value. Thus the tourist is evidently the instrument of Providence intended to relieve him of them at less than a quarter of their marketable price. Then arises the situation, if this *be* a delusion and there *are* no pearls, where can be the trade, and why does not the delusion die out ? For even this self-same tourist, so ignorant in other matters, knows that it is not wise to buy pearls from the smooth-spoken Cinghalese who crowd the ship's deck. To this end these simple children of fair Ceylon manufacture pearls that would deceive even

the mother oyster herself, and dispose of them on advantageous terms to their darker skinned brethren.

While on shore the tourist possibly observes a Manilla boy hanging around in a suspicious fashion. Awaiting his opportunity, he enters into conversation with him, and, after many assurances of absolute secrecy, elicits the fact that, unknown to the owner of his lugger, he has pearls to dispose of. Retiring to a secret place, half a dozen beautiful specimens are produced, examined, and the price inquired. If genuine, they might be worth from 50*l.* to 80*l.* apiece. The simple nigger only asks 30*l.* for the lot, and finally allows himself to be beaten down to 10*l.* The deception is so perfect that it is not until they fall into professional hands that the fraud is discovered. Then the purchaser, unmindful of the fact that he himself had, to all intents and purposes, cheated the poor nigger in the sale, wishes to postpone other business in order to hunt up that heathen, and recover his 10*l.* He says he has been grossly swindled, and he wants to know why the —, etc., etc., the missionaries can't do the work they're paid for, etc., and inculcate into their flock a proper appreciation of their duties towards their fellow-men, etc. He says that very often. And each time he comes to look upon himself more and more as an injured individual.

Day after day, for the reason that nothing else offered, we wandered either over the hill and through the cemetery (a sombre place, where the bodies obtained from the unfortunate 'Quetta' are buried), or past the Chinese gardens, and up to the fortifications then in

course of construction. At other times we loafed hours away on the sandy foreshore, looking across the blue water to the other islands, beyond which, if the eye could but see, the coast of New Guinea peeps up. When we could we prowled the harbour, boarding lugger after lugger in search of employment. But it was disheartening work; nothing ever offered.

Apart from its intrinsic wealth, Thursday Island is exceedingly valuable for defence purposes, commanding as it does the principal entrance to the smooth water inside the Great Barrier Reef, or, in more figurative language, being the lock of the northern gate of the entire eastern coastline of Queensland. On the western side of Torres Strait the sea is open and presents but few dangers, but on the other side the Barrier Reef itself commences, with innumerable reefs and shoals, and navigation is not only highly dangerous but well-nigh impossible. The easiest approach is by way of Prince of Wales Channel, about ten miles long by one and a half wide, though another course, through Endeavour Strait, a few miles south of Thursday, is with proper precaution quite practicable. Thus it will be seen that Thursday Island, lying between these two channels, at the only points where entrance is really safe, must naturally become a place of considerable importance in time of war, not only as a coaling station, but also, as I have already said, from the fact that it practically commands the main entrance to Queensland. With this in view, large fortifications have lately been erected on a hill overlooking Port Kennedy,

thus assuring the safety of this most important spot.

When we had been about a fortnight in the island our poverty began to assume serious proportions. We foresaw that, unless something turned up, we should once more be in a terrible plight, and this time without anything saleable wherewith to increase our wealth. Of course we were getting used to it, but then that didn't make matters any the more pleasant. Every night we walked the jetty, then in course of construction, and discussed the matter. But the more we talked of it, the worse it seemed to grow. What was going to become of us we could not see. The deep water was very soothing, and we derived a melancholy satisfaction from the fact that sharks were numerous in the bay.

Then, just as we were at our wits' ends, a chance offered, and we clutched it ravenously. A trading schooner put in, *en route* for Port Moresby, New Guinea, and as she had a vacancy for a couple of hands, and preferred white men to niggers, we shipped. That same evening we swept out of harbour, immensely relieved at having found something to do.

Under favourable circumstances the voyage from Thursday Island to Port Moresby is only a short one, and is more like a pleasure excursion than anything else. Our cargo was for the most part trading goods, with a few packages for the government, and a case or two for one of the mission societies.

For the benefit of the ignorant, and to parade

my own knowledge, I may here remark that New Guinea is divided into three portions. Holland claims half the territory west of 141° E. longitude; Germany holds the north-west quarter, with the Islands of New Britain and New Ireland; while the south-eastern quarter and all islands and reefs between 141° and 155° E. longitude and 80° and 12° S. latitude are the property of Great Britain.

The rivers of most importance are, in the English section, the Fly, ascended for over 600 miles; in German territory, the Empress Augusta, explored for something like 400 miles; and in Dutch New Guinea, the Amberno, of which very little as yet is known. There are other smaller rivers, too numerous to mention.

British New Guinea, again, is divided into three sections (this is not a geographical treatise), East, Central, and Western, each of which is controlled by a resident magistrate, who, from what we could gather, must have his hands pretty full at times.

Port Moresby, the chief settlement, is situated in the Central Province, on what might be termed the instep of the island, about the middle of the south coast. From the harbour it wears a decidedly picturesque appearance. Blue water surrounds those native villages which are built on piles out at sea; others peep from among stately palm groves on land; while all are backed by the green-clad hills, which rise in some instances to a height of nearly 1,500 feet. The harbour is convenient and roomy, shaped something like the figure 3. At present it

is only in an embryo state, but in time, as the country advances, it must certainly become a great resort for shipping.

Backed by a spirit of real enterprise, two townships have been surveyed to the southward, dignified with the high-sounding names of East and West Granville. The former has not as yet been taken up, but the latter is the seat of the government



PORT MORESBY

offices, the boat sheds, and a strong commodious gaol. The administrator's residence is located in this part of the settlement, and in what will soon be a lovely botanical garden. Further along, in the outer harbour, are the chief native villages, and on a low ridge to their rear, the headquarters of the London Missionary Society.

The soil of British New Guinea is in most parts extremely fertile. Yams, bananas, pumpkins, sugar-

cane, maize, taro, sago, and palms flourish luxuriantly, for, unlike the greater portion of Australia, the rainfall is certain and heavy. On the south-eastern coast the rainy season falls during the north-west monsoons, which occur between the months of December and May, while in the remaining months strong south-easterly trades blow, and the climate is then considered extremely healthy.

The native villages are quaint little concerns, admirably built, and not unfrequently possessing considerable pretension to architectural design; they have a charm quite different from their owners, who are cowardly, lying, treacherous, and superstitious to the last degree. I only know one worse, and he is the Malay, but then that hardly counts for anything.

Papuan women are by no means ill-looking; in fact, as a race, they would rank high, if they would not tattoo quite so much.

As a rule, the men are well set up fellows, and in spite of the drawbacks mentioned before, make excellent policemen. I say policemen, because the Administrator has lately organised a constabulary force which should eventually prove of much benefit to the Possession. A constabulary force and a gaol, I take it, are two of the things that point conclusively to successful colonisation. New Guinea only wants a House of Assembly and Universal Suffrage to make its future assured.

The principal animals are the kangaroo, the wild hog, the turtle, and the dugong. The last is

particularly interesting. In the first place, he is a herbivorous cetaceous animal (whatever that may be), with a tapering body, ending in a crescent-shaped fin; was popularly supposed to exist only in the Indian Ocean, but has been by Cuvier denominated the *Halicore australis*. The dugong differs from his first cousin, the whale, from the fact of being herbivorous, not carnivorous, and is, I believe, the chief of the sub-division. In appearance he is a peculiar beast, having the body of a porpoise, combined with the head of a calf; but, unlike the porpoise again, he possesses no dorsal fin. In length he varies from six to eight feet, and is altogether a harmless and inoffensive creature. For food he exists on the grasses and plants growing at the bottom of the ocean; but, unfortunately for himself, he is particularly fond of a coarse grass to be found where Queensland rivers flow into the sea.

The flesh of the dugong is extremely luscious, and, indeed, it is said that no portion of his body is without some value. The bones resemble ivory, while the skin, if properly treated, makes a nourishing jelly for invalids; if tanned aright, it is said to resemble hogskin. Dugong oil is esteemed a splendid therapeutic agent, and is much in demand. Altogether the dugong (in spite of his herbivorousness and cetaceousness) is a very remarkable animal.

Alligators are unpleasantly numerous in the rivers and swamps, while the skins of birds of paradise, parrots, pigeons, and kingfishers add con-

siderably to the revenue of the natives. While we are on this subject mention might also be made of the hundreds of varieties of orchid that are found and sent away to European dealers every year.

On reaching Port Moresby we said 'good-bye' to our boat, and the same evening were fortunate enough to obtain berths aboard a pearling lugger just in. She was a neat little craft of about fifteen tons, the property of a pearling company. The diver in command was a Somersetshire man, who had been knocking about these waters with varying success for many years; the crew consisted of two Manilla boys, and, when we joined, our two selves. Two of the hands had deserted, and the diver was anxious to complete his number in order to try another *patch* before returning to Thursday Island.

At daylight we hove anchor and stole out of the harbour. The signs of approaching day, the mist just clearing off the water, a sea like glass, a faint blue smoke rising among the palm trees, a soft breeze, and the constant bubbling round our bows, all helped to make up a perfect morning.

For fourteen hours we steered a north-westerly course, keeping the green coast-line in sight. Then having towards night-fall arrived at the spot we sought, we anchored, preparatory to starting diving on the morrow. With the first signs of day work was commenced, pumps were rigged, pipes fixed, and the diving dress prepared. After breakfast the diver donned his curious apparel, the leaden boots were put on, the weights fixed on back and chest,

the life-line adjusted, and the heavy copper helmet screwed to the collar plate. Only a staysail remained on the boat, while the anchor was lowered to within a fathom or two of the bottom. This precaution is taken in order to check the boat's impetus, otherwise the diver, when below, would stand a great chance of being dragged off his feet. As soon as these



PEARLING LUGGER

preparations were complete, the pump hands were bidden pump, the air entered the helmet, the tender took his end of the life or signal-line, and the diver descended.

The principle of diving is a simple one. When the diver, walking or dancing along the bottom of the ocean like a ballet girl (he does not, under ordinary circumstances, remain working in one place as is

popularly supposed) comes across any shell, he picks it up and places it in a small canvas bag, which he carries with him for that purpose. This bag, when full, is pulled up and emptied, and the shells opened and retained. The shells, not the pearls, are the staple industry in Thursday Island. The pearls, if any (and no one is near to see), are appropriated to the finder's own use, and this accounts for our tourist's notion that natives always have pearls to sell.

One day, in a fit of extreme recklessness, to which our nature is not often prone, we prevailed upon the skipper to allow us to try our hands at diving. To our delight he consented, but no sooner was permission obtained than we began to regret our imprudence. All sorts of horrors flashed through our brain, until we were on the verge of withdrawing our request. But having asked the privilege, it would never have done to show the white feather. The Long'un pointed this out to me, stating that it behoved *me* to risk even death in the interest of Science. I quite saw the value of his argument, in fact I could have used it myself in a very convincing fashion *on anybody else!*

Before I had time to expostulate, the dress was forthcoming and with small ceremony I was bundled into it. The helmet was fastened on, and the glass front screwed in. When I realised this a feeling of being cut off from all the world took possession of me. I was in another sphere, where the air smelt very much of indiarubber, and came in gusts from some mysterious region at the back of my head. To

my astonishment I found I was able to breathe quite naturally, without the least trouble or exertion ; but owing to the weight of the dress, the great boots, and the leads fore and aft, I was anchored where I stood, as helpless as a baby. At a signal, and with assistance, I descended the ladder. As I entered the water, I wondered what would be my fate should the men at the pumps die of heart disease, the boat sink, or any other disasters happen. However, I reached the last step of the ladder in safety, and as I wasn't dead, began to feel quite proud of my achievement.

A yawning gulf of ladderless fathoms lay beneath me, and bearing in mind certain advice given beforehand, I jumped. As I landed on

the bottom I felt a sharp *plop* in both ears. This was followed by a tiny flow of blood, and had I not been assured that this would prove the best thing that could happen to me, I should have been alarmed. As it was I found it relieved the head



DIVER AT WORK

and prevented any disagreeable sensations while below.

The bottom of the sea (I was diving in about six fathoms) was, to say the least of it, disappointing. In my imagination, it had always taken the form of a sort of fairyland, full of many-coloured corals, shrubs of brilliant seaweed, waving grasses, gleaming fish, and white sands. In place of all this I found myself upon a level plain, out of which rose here and there ugly rocks; true there was a considerable amount of coral, but it was nothing to rave about; many fish there were, but they didn't gleam; occasionally I passed tufts of seaweed, sometimes of a brilliant colour, but more often of a muddy and sombre hue; and instead of the white sand I had expected, I found a sort of yellowish mud which was not at all to my taste. Now and again, at considerable distances, a few oysters were met with, and these I immediately secured. Looking up, I could plainly see the keel of the lugger moving through the water above me, while ahead the anchor like a sign post, dangled, inviting me to follow.

In appearance I was not fair to look at. My body was swollen to enormous size, yet neither the exertion of walking, nor the weight of the dress oppressed me in the least degree. Most marvellous of all, when it became necessary for me to jump on to a rock, once as much as ten feet high, the ease with which the leap was accomplished was absurd. Even a twenty-foot jump was as nothing, and I began to feel that I might yet figure as an athlete, if only I might

be allowed to do my jumps, in a diving dress, at the bottom of the sea.

As this was my first venture, I only stayed under water ten minutes (it seemed like hours); but each successive attempt gave me courage, until at last I was able to remain below as long as anyone.

Whether it is the weight of the water, the air, or the cold, I cannot say, but it is nevertheless the unfortunate fate of many divers to become paralysed after having been long engaged in the work. One particularly interesting young fellow we met in Thursday Island was about to leave for England, in order to ascertain his fate, symptoms of the dread disease having declared themselves. It would seem there are drawbacks to every occupation, even one carried on at the bottom of the sea.

CHAPTER VII

*THURSDAY ISLAND—CAPE YORK—ALBANY PASS—LIGHT
SHIPS—COOKTOWN—PORT DOUGLAS*



N our return to Port Kennedy we were again thrown upon our own resources. We could get no

work, to beg we were ashamed, and owing to our limited education we

had not even sufficient ability to thieve with any likelihood of success. It began to grow upon us that the pleasant expectations we had formed regarding Thursday Island and the pearl fishery were not going to be realised. We waited and waited, like Mr. Micawber, 'for something to turn up,' but beyond an occasional day's work among the shipping we were without employment of any kind whatsoever. We began even to envy the lot of the prisoners in the gaol. They were at least certain of a meal.

If ever I want to have a good old lazy time, untrammelled by the thoughts, cares, and anxieties

inseparable from that mysterious occupation known as getting one's living, I shall commit an offence and get consigned for three months to Thursday Island Gaol. It was my good fortune, one morning, to see two prisoners engaged whitewashing the Post-office fence, and I am prepared to assert that never since have I seen anything so lazy and comfortable, as their method of carrying out that particular occupation. To show their position in the social scale they had 'Thursday Island' printed in large letters across their backs, and from the placid and contented fashion of their labour, I gathered something of what a similar sentence to theirs must mean.

Allow your fancy, gentle reader, to picture for you a lovely morning, a bright blue sky flecked with white clouds, a merry sea dancing in the sunlight, tropical foliage throwing an inviting shade, a comfortable seat on the ground beneath such shade, a line of unwhitewashed fence, a fascinating brush, a bucket of mixture, and nothing in the world to do but to lay it gently on. All this with the certainty of meal times, an expansive conscience, no prying warders, and unlimited opportunities of obtaining liquor. I would rather, and I assert it unhesitatingly, far rather be a prisoner for a week in humble little Thursday Island Gaol, than work out a sentence of ten years, or even more, in statelier Portland. That is just one of my peculiarities. I am of a contented, rather than a grasping disposition.

The proprietress of our hotel is a tender-hearted lady. Besides her own family she possesses another

and extensive one by adoption. This includes a Mauritian nigger and his wife, a sweet little half-caste girl of six, a collection of Binghis (aboriginals), a Japanese cook, a monkey, a spaniel puppy, and a pelican. The monkey is of a savage disposition, and resides, for the most part, under the house, where he is popularly supposed by the youth of the neighbourhood to represent the devil. The spaniel puppy is bumptious and irreverent, while the pelican combines the dignity of a bank manager with the sustained confidence of a newly-appointed policeman. When the monkey uses the puppy's woolly coat as a game preserve we smile, but when the puppy, grossly insulted, bites the monkey's tail, and retreats to be swallowed by the pelican, we laugh outright. Having nothing better to occupy our minds, we find pleasure in these simple things, and when one is 'hard up' (I dislike the term, but am compelled to use it) strange things present themselves in the character of amusements.

A totally irrelevant incident suggests itself here. Not many years ago I was permitted the friendship of a man who came from England to Australia, on fortune-making thoughts intent. He was long, lean, lanky, and lazy, and he spent the money his sorely tried parent had given him to start afresh with, in riotous living. As his capital departed, so his state deserted him, and before he had been two months in the colony he had migrated from hotel to boarding-house, and from boarding-house to common lodging-house, until at last he came to sleeping wherever his fancy prompted. This generally took the form of railway arches and public gardens.

One day—and this is the incident I desire to relate—I was hurrying along to keep an appointment, when I felt my shoulder touched; turning, I confronted a thin, haggard, out-at-elbowed individual, whom I recognised as my once too stylish friend.

‘Come down this alley,’ he said, softly, ‘and I’ll impart to you some curious information.’

In the seclusion of this by-path he solemnly lifted his right foot, and allowed me to see that the sole of his boot was almost entirely gone. In its place appeared some discoloured substance, looking suspiciously like dirty blotting-paper. I asked what it was.

‘Cardboard,’ he whispered, mysteriously; ‘that’s what I want to tell you. I have made a peculiar discovery. You must know that for the last week I have spent my time going round insurance offices begging for old almanacs. The clerks swear a bit, but they generally give ’em to me, and then I take ’em home, cut ’em up, and use ’em as you see here! Some almanacs last me two days—some only an hour or two! And—hush’—(in a whisper)—‘my boy, you may take it from me *that the difference in the stability of the cardboard is a sure guarantee of the stability of the office.* Sound cardboard, sound business; cheap and nasty cardboard, cheap and nasty business. In the words of the Scriptures, “By their cardboards ye shall know them!”’ Then he borrowed a trifle and slunk away. When I was hard up myself, and my boots looked thin, I remembered that strange little bit of experience.

Day by day, in spite of the most rigid economy,

our reserve fund grew smaller and smaller. We had long denied ourselves everything but absolute necessities, discarded smoking, and given up extraneous refreshments of any kind whatsoever. Yet the money seemed positively to melt away. One dreadful morning we found ourselves reduced to a shilling and two pence halfpenny, the whole of which we promptly turned into coppers. It is a strange but solemn fact, that fourteen pence halfpenny in coppers looks a great deal more than one and two pence halfpenny in the other way.

Do what we would to distract our thoughts, our poverty at last became such a waking nightmare that we hardly dared look each other in the face. Then one glorious morning a letter arrived from Adelaide, and, enormous relief, it contained funds. It was only just in time; another day would have found us desperate. We trembled when we broke the seal, we gasped when we broached the contents, and we could have wept when we cashed the order.

That night we held a council of war, and determined, as it was no use remaining where we were, to set sail for the mainland, on the chance that fortune would be kinder to us there. It was at this period that the thought first struck us of endeavouring to cross the Australian Continent from north to south. There was a desperate air about it that consorted well with our position, and it would have gone hard with any cripple, or confirmed paralytic, who might have laughed at our resolve. With this in view, we decided to sail at once for Normanton, but

for sufficiently good reasons were eventually persuaded to try the other route down the Eastern Coast to Townsville, visiting Cooktown, Cairns, and Port Douglas on our way. Accordingly, the following Saturday afternoon, from the deck of one of the Australian United Steam Navigation Company's boats, we bade Thursday Island, its Queen, and its multifarious and interesting population 'good-bye!' and started off.

So dangerous is the coast from Thursday Island to Cooktown reckoned, that it is compulsory for every steamer proceeding between these ports to carry a certificated pilot. *Our* pilot, besides proving himself as hale and hearty an old seadog as ever drank a glass of grog at any one else's expense, was a most interesting and obliging individual. By his courtesy and that of the captain, we were permitted a good insight into the difficulties of the navigation.

Leaving Thursday Island, an almost due easterly course was steered. In so doing we passed the Queensland Leper Station, where hopelessness must reign, if it reigns anywhere on earth; sighted the Adolphus group, scene of the wreck of the unfortunate 'Quetta'; and at sundown entered the Albany Pass.

This pass, four miles in length, and in some places nearly 500 yards in width, separates Albany Island from the mainland, and is a place of exceeding beauty. On one hand rises a tropical island covered with undergrowth of every hue through the wealth

of which look out cliffs of bold outline, the whole girt with saffron sands upon which tiny wavelets ripple with ceaseless music. On the other hand, across the ribbon of blue sea, rise high forest-clad hills, which again seem to soften off almost imperceptibly into the azure sky. On an eminence overlooking the pass, stands the lonely but picturesque residence of Mr. Jardine, the pioneer of Somerset and Thursday Island, whose cattle station extends for many miles



ALBANY PASS

along this bleak and dangerous coast. As a mark of respect, which has become customary since Mr. Jardine's humanity to the survivors of the unfortunate 'Quetta,' we dip our ensign as we steam by.

Ere we are out of the pass, the sun is down: a strange weird sunset, lighting up the rugged cliffs ashore, and lending an air of ghostly mystery to a cluster of tall red ant-hills near the beach.

As the sun disappears, a vast number of flying

foxes cross from an island to the mainland, in such a cloud as almost to obscure the heavens. And so close to the shore are we steaming that the melancholy cry of a bird comes off to us quite distinctly.

After the evening meal has been partaken of, the pilot, whose duty now commences, invites me to visit the bridge with him, an invitation I am not slow to accept. The sea is as smooth as a millpond, rising and falling like the breast of a sleeping child; but only a few miles to port we know that the Great Barrier Reef is thundering ominously, able at a moment's notice to rend in pieces the largest ship afloat.

Rising like a gigantic coral wall from the uttermost depths of the sea, this reef stretches for more than a thousand miles along an already sufficiently dangerous coast. Inside, the water is usually smooth, but outside, the great Pacific gales break upon the rocks with murderous violence, and woe betide the unfortunate vessel that finds herself upon those cruel teeth. Fabulous must be the wealth of the ships of which this treacherous reef has been the ruin.

Taking the pilot at his word, I determine to spend the entire night on the bridge, in order to see all that is to be seen of the intricate navigation hereabouts. And what a picture I have before me!

The western sky, as the sunset fades, gradually fills with a wonderful afterglow. The sea is flecked with the most delicate salmon and pink streaks, which again gradually merge themselves into the deepest of French greys as the darkness thickens.

Sometimes we are close in shore, sometimes a long

way out; but never for a moment is the voyage without interest and variety.

Presently a few stars begin to twinkle dimly, the side lights appear, the look-out stations himself forward, while the sound of a piano, with a warm glow of lamp-light, comes from the saloon aft. Pulling on a thick coat, the pilot falls to pacing the bridge, remarking that it is necessary for him to have all his wits about him. Occasionally he draws up alongside



MAIL-BOAT AND LIGHT-SHIP

me to point out something of interest in the great barren cliff line along which we are steering. But these conversations become fewer and farther between as the night advances. So hour after hour goes by, the look-out man keeping the tally, until at last I begin to feel drowsy enough to contemplate retiring. This, however, my host will not permit; he bids me keep awake for something that will presently occur.

Shortly before midnight we round Cape Granville and enter Temple Bay. By this time the wind has risen, and with it the sea; our boat begins to roll ponderously. The pilot is evidently on the look-out for something. Presently he points out to me a tiny speck of light ahead, which gradually grows larger until, by one bell, we are slowing down abreast of the Piper Island light-ship, one of the loneliest situations along this lonely coast. And what a dramatic picture it presents: a dark night, thick driving clouds, an angry sea, frowning cliffs, a straining, pitching light-ship, and a lamp-studded mail-boat. A sailing-boat puts off to us, and our whistle advises her to be quick. She belongs to a *bêche-de-mer* boat in the vicinity, and is manned by black Gins. The sea breaks over her many times a minute, ducking everybody on board. One moment she rides high on the crest of a wave, the next she is wallowing deep down in the trough of the sea. It is a difficult business to get her alongside, but eventually she manages to come close enough to catch the mail-bags; the next instant the sea has swept her past us, out into the black night again.

What a strange thing life aboard a light-ship in this desolate region must be! On one side almost unknown country, with tribes of hostile blacks; on the other, the pitiless thunder of the Barrier Reef. It must be strange to have no interest in life save the passing of the mail-boats, and no knowledge of what is happening in the world save what can be gleaned from letters and week-old papers; yet men are found

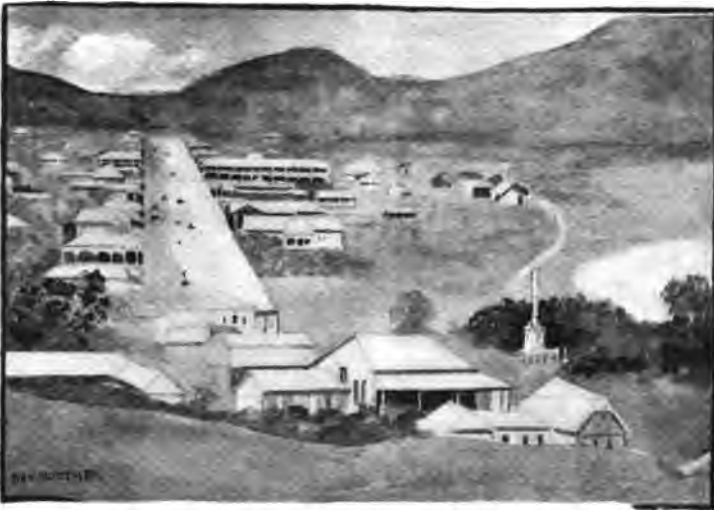
to undertake it, and for a miserable pittance, of which it will take years of constant thrift to save even enough to retire, in the most modest fashion, upon.

Just as day is breaking we open into Weymouth Bay, famous as the scene of a sad incident in Kennedy's famous exploration journey in 1848.

I do not know why it should be so, but daybreak at sea always strikes me as being more beautiful than daybreak ashore, and certainly it is so on this occasion. First, the eastern stars begin to lose their radiance, and this fading gradually overspreads the entire sky, until low down on the horizon, the palest touch of silver grey appears. Then a bar of salmon pink spreads itself along the sky line, followed by a touch of orange, then purple and gold, until slowly and with infinite gradations, the whole sky is suffused with colour. Nor is the colour limited to the sky alone, for the sea, once more perfectly calm, has taken to itself a new glory. A strange weird hush holds everything, and it is as though the ship, looking twice her real size in the uncanny dawn, is ploughing her way through a floor of dark green jade, rapidly turning into silver. It is more than a little lonesome, and it seems an eternity before the sun rises. When he does make his appearance, it is without warning ; he leaps into the sky like a young god. Night is over. A half-awakened steward crawls on to the bridge with coffee and biscuits ; and taking a last look round, I go below to snatch an hour or two's sleep before the passengers render rest impossible.

The course steered all day was an unavoidably

dangerous one, reefs abounded in every direction. High precipitous cliffs frowned on us continually, at the bottom of which, huge rollers smashed in surges of white foam. During the day we sighted and slowed down towards another light-ship, the 'Claremont'; and here again a boat put off to us for mails, this time bringing our captain, who is a collector



COOKTOWN

of marine curiosities, two fine specimens of coral, and a number of beautiful shells.

By seven o'clock next morning we were alongside the wharf at Cooktown, lying under a high, tree-clad hill, and looking up the street of a truly quaint little town. There was a homely air about it all. From my port-hole I could see two small boys fighting on the wharf-head, a man quarrelling with his wife in a

garden on the hillside, and the town drunkard waking up under a spreading tree to wonder if our whistle were a creation of his fancy, or the beginning of his usual complaint.

Cooktown is situated on the north side of a remarkably fine bay, at the mouth of the Endeavour River, and is surrounded by bold granite hills. The river received its name from Captain Cook's ship, the 'Endeavour,' which was beached here to caulk a leak. Mount Cook, as may be supposed, was named after the celebrated navigator himself.

As soon as things were a little settled, a few of us set off to some baths, situated farther down the Bay, and enjoyed an excellent swim, unscared even by the talk of alligators, which are numerous hereabout. The baths are alligator-proof, and it is just our reckless bravery to have no fear for animals which can't get in at us. Personally, I'd pat a stuffed alligator with any man.

Returning to the boat, we discovered a bevy of black Gins (aboriginal women)—splendid specimens of their race—paddling their bark canoes alongside, and clamouring, like Aden and Malay boys, for diving silver. They are equally expert divers, and, if tricked into diving by means of bright buttons or pieces of tin, prove equally fluent. 'All is not *silver* that glitters' is a timeworn motto of theirs.

After breakfast we explored the town, beginning with the monument, erected in the main street, to the memory of Captain Cook and his visit on Sunday, June 17, 1770.

From the higher ground at the back of the town, a very good view of both the settlement and the bay may be obtained. The outline of the country is bold, except at the point where the river joins the sea. Here dense mangrove swamps exist, which are both uninteresting and unhealthy.

Architecturally the town has nothing to boast of. What most strikes the visitor is the number of public-houses met with on every hand. We counted twenty-six on one side of the main street, and had it not been for a sudden indisposition, which occurred while passing the last number, we might have brought the total up considerably.

In this hostelry we made the acquaintance of a character. He was short and thickset, boasted red hair, was also freckled and cross-eyed. He was leaning against the bar, twirling an empty glass, and he seemed to be wondering how he could best induce the landlord to stretch his credit to the extent of one more nobbler. We could not help seeing that whatever else he took would only be for show; for he was already intoxicated enough to suit the most fastidious taste. To prove that he was a professor of the art, not a sign, save a slight glassiness about the left optic, and a twitching of the mouth, betokened his condition.

As we entered he looked round, and for a moment swayed gently to and fro; then, taking his bearings by a grease spot on the wall, staggered towards us, saying confidentially to the landlord:

‘Look here, don’t you never say anything more to me about the spirit of prophecy. Don’t, for I

knew it—I knew I should meet them again before I died. Oh, boys, boys! And to think poor Uncle Anthony never lived to see this blessed day! He's gone, boys—gone in the hope of a glorious resurrection—passed away in a clean shirt and a bank balance ten days ago. But welcome back! welcome back! even if it does make my old heart bleed to see you. Though you're only just in time, you're not too late, for I got news to-day of the biggest thing on earth—the biggest crushings to the ton mortal man ever heard of, and you shall have a quarter-share apiece. No, no; don't thank me—don't thank me; I can't bear it. I'm poor old Uncle Bill, and if he can't help his dead sister's boys before his grey hairs go down in sorrow to the grave, it's a worse world than I take it for. What did you say? What will I take? Well, well, I don't often drink in business hours, but on this joyful occasion I think I will take a nobbler of the old stuff. No, no water, thank you. The spirit is willing, but with water it's weak. Here's luck!'

Tossing it off with a practised hand, he shed a simple tear, failed in an attempt to borrow half-a-crown, pressed our hands, and, finally, stating that he must go and tell Aunt Tabitha the joyful tidings, opened the swing door and staggered out. He was a cheerful old reprobate, and had all the makings of an excellent actor. But to return to Cooktown.

The country all about is highly mineral. Gold, silver, antimony, and tin have been found in promising quantities; but the glory of the district and the

fortune of the town has been the Palmer Gold Fields, not many miles inland. The history of this marvellous spot reads like a fairy tale. The value of the gold obtained from it up to the present time equals something like 5,000,000*l*. But this is not the only treasure-trove in the district. In 1890 a new field was discovered on the Starcke River, some sixty-five miles from Cooktown, and has, so far, yielded something like 20,000*l*. worth of the precious metal.

From all accounts, the Palmer is now pretty well played out ; but as so many new fields have sprung up to take its place, its loss need hardly be taken into consideration. Chinamen are, however, still making a good thing out of it, I believe.

Apart from the country's auriferous prospects, the soil is highly fertile. Sugar, rice, tobacco, oranges, and cocoanuts thrive splendidly ; while mangoes, bananas, pineapples, guavas, lichees, and granadillas flourish almost too luxuriantly. Besides all these advantages, Cooktown enjoys a lucrative and ever-growing trade with New Guinea, while its own *bêche-de-mer* and trepang fisheries are by no means to be despised.

As some proof of the wealth of this hardy little place, it may be interesting to state that the value of the imports for 1891 amounted to no less than 65,340*l*., while the exports totalled the large sum of 133,711*l*.

At three o'clock the same afternoon we steamed out of the harbour, rounded Grassy Hill, as the bold entrance to the bay on the southern side is

called, and steered for Port Douglas. *En route*, we passed Cape Tribulation, a bleak, desolate headland, quite in keeping with its name; indeed, the whole appearance of the coast, as far as the eye can reach, is stern and forbidding. One can quite fancy intrepid Captain Cook's feelings as, day after day, badly equipped, under-manned, scurvy-ridden, his ship



PORT DOUGLAS

ploughed her way through these desolate and almost impossible seas. No wonder he gave the capes and headlands such dismal names, hedged in, as he was, on one side by a barren, rocky coast, peopled with

barbarous savages, and, on the other, by the never-ceasing thunder of the Great Barrier Reef.

Unfortunately, as it was late in the evening before we sighted Port Douglas, shoregoing was impossible. A small steam launch put off to meet us, pitching and tossing in a most unpleasant manner, and into her we discharged what cargo we had for the place.

Then after a stay of under an hour, we resumed our way, bound for Cairns.

CHAPTER VIII

CAIRNS—SUGAR INDUSTRY—KANAKAS—RICE CULTIVATION—CAIRNS AND HERBERTON RAILWAY—THE BARRON FALLS



CAIRNS is simply a little tropical heaven, tucked into the Queensland coast line. I know of no other place at all like it. Situated in Trinity Bay, at the entrance to Trinity Inlet, it was so named by Captain Cook, who, after a series of extraordinary hardships, put in here on Trinity Sunday

1770. Taken with the Inlet, Trinity Bay constitutes one of the most perfect harbours along the entire length of the East Australian coast.

The inlet, a splendid land-locked sheet of water seven miles in length, with an average width of two,

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was discovered by some police officers and cedar cutters in 1877, but for many years was put to no practical use. Now the entrance has been carefully dredged, and vessels, drawing even as much as twenty-four feet of water, can enter it with perfect ease and safety. With these advantages it would certainly seem destined to become the real harbour of Cairns at no very distant date.

Trinity Bay itself stretches from Cape Grafton to Cape Tribulation, and is protected from the violence of the open ocean by the Great Barrier Reef which lies about twelve miles out. Immediately opposite the bay, the reef has an opening called Trinity Channel, which is certified as of sufficient width to contain the largest man of war afloat.

The new comer, reviewing in his mind all these advantages, cannot help being impressed with the fact that Cairns would make an admirable naval depot, the inlet alone being capable of containing the entire Australian squadron at one and the same time. I recommend this idea to the Admiralty, for surely Nature must have had some thought of the use it might be put to when she constructed it.

The town itself, called after Sir William Wellington Cairns, once Governor of Queensland, was commenced in 1877, and cannot be said to be well situated. Its history, a strange and chequered one, illustrates the peculiar ups and downs of pioneering in new countries. Early in that year a few settlers were attracted to the district by the wonderful stories

told them by mariners who had chanced to touch there. These adventurous ones pitched their tents where Cairns now stands, but before they had been there very long, news came to them of the discovery of a river running into the sea, about two miles north of Trinity Inlet. On going to ascertain the truth of this statement for themselves they found a river navigable for over ten miles, winding its way across



CAIRNS

a beautiful alluvial plain covered with dense tropical vegetation, such as tree-ferns, areca palms, fan palms, wild nutmegs, native indiarubber trees, red cedars, kauri pines, wild bananas, and a conglomeration of beautiful creepers and orchids too numerous for description. On this plain, so the discoverers said, stalked multitudes of huge cassowaries and kangaroo, while at night-fall millions of large bats and flying foxes flew overhead. Butterflies and

beetles fluttered on every side, and snakes of terrible dimensions crawled through the undergrowth. Alligators were also numerous.

With this discovery, trade, traffic, and shipping were immediately diverted from the inlet to the mouth of the river, at a spot to be soon afterwards named Smithfield. This Smithfield, from 1877 to 1879 became the port for the Hodgekinson Gold Fields, and quite a thriving town, boasting no less than fourteen public-houses (a sure sign of a Queensland township's prosperity), and a score of large business premises. In 1879, however, an easier track over the Ranges was discovered from another point twenty miles to the northward (now Port Douglas), and that discovery sounded the death knell of Smithfield. Trade moved to the new spot, the people naturally followed the trade, the township was deserted, not even a nigger remained to grace it, and now dense jungle covers the place where once it stood.

In 1880 a sugar boom set in and raged with exceeding violence. As a result the land round about Trinity Inlet, and where Cairns now stands, became highly valuable, and was immediately taken up for plantations. 'The Hambledon,' 'The Pyramid,' and the 'Hap Wah' Companies were the first to start in that neighbourhood; while the whole of the magnificent plain on the banks of the Barron River, stretching from the ranges to the sea for about ten miles, and from the town of Cairns northward for fifteen, was, at the same time, purchased

for agricultural purposes by Mr. Thomatis, an enthusiastic agriculturist and a native of Northern Italy; by Messrs. Blair & Co., of Melbourne; and Mr. Brinsmead, of London, together with a few other enterprising colonists.

The fame of the land soon spread, and with this increased importance the baby town of Cairns began to assert itself. Town allotments were pegged out and boomed. Speculation in land followed, with the result that about four years ago the Government, at one of these land sales, pocketed no less than 40,000*l*.

With true Australian go-a-headness Cairns lost no time in improving her position, and her devoted mother, Nature, prodigal of gifts, helped her. The Northcote Antimony, the Herberton Tin, the Muldiva Silver mines, the Etheridge, Croydon, and Georgetown Gold Fields, all situated over the Ranges at the back of the town, lent their aid.

The next move was a claim on Government for a railway, whereby the vast wealth of these places might be brought to Cairns for shipment. After a while this claim was recognised, specifications were prepared, the contract let, and now a line is in course of construction which has but few equals, and is perhaps without its superior, in the whole railway-making world. Already it creeps over the Ranges towards Herberton. Eventually it will take in the various fields mentioned above, cross the base of the Peninsula, and penetrate even to the distant shores of the Gulf of Carpentaria. About fifty miles

are at present completed. The second section of sixteen miles is said to be the most expensive known, costing no less than $1\frac{1}{2}$ million pounds sterling, or a good deal more than a pound an inch. Of the beauties of the line I shall speak presently. In the meantime, let me give some idea of one of the

principal seats of the sugar industry in the neighbourhood of Cairns.



SUGAR CANE

Hambledon Plantation, the property of Messrs. Swallow Brothers, is one of the many model plantations of the district, and may well be taken as typical. Situated at the foot of the Islay Hills, it is surrounded by an amphitheatre of jungle-clad eminences. Seen in the early morning, with the sun straggling in long shafts through the clouds

which veil the highest peaks, or at twilight, when the weird gullies are filling with the shadows of approaching night, Hambledon is a sight to remember for ever. But these hills have another charm apart from their scenic beauty, they protect the young cane from biting winds, and condense into needful rain the clouds that linger on them. Perhaps as a result, two bewitching waterfalls exist

near by, and I am assured that the whole water supply of the mill is drawn from ever-running rivulets whose birthplaces are in these ranges. Altogether the view is as charming as an artistic eye could wish, and it is no wonder that Hambledon, being one of the few properties that survived the depression in the sugar industry a few years back, is considered a show place of the district.

The business arrangements of the plantation are most complete, even to a tramway, $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles long, leading to a neat little wharf on Trinity Inlet, where vessels of the deepest draught can load in comfort. It must be remembered that, besides sugar, large quantities of fruit and timber are exported from Cairns annually.

From the fields of growing cane we pass to the mill itself, which is of the latest pattern, even to the Décauville railway for carrying the cane into the works. It is calculated that this mill can turn out ten tons of sugar per day, and, if one doesn't try to understand the mechanism, the working is simplicity itself.

Hambledon, with its numerous buildings, overseer's residence, mill, huts (both of white hands and Kanakas), lathe room, lamp room, laboratory, engineers' stores, blacksmiths', carpenters', and fitters' shops, etc., presents the appearance of a small township. The owner's residence is situated on the top of a knoll, commanding a lovely view of Trinity Harbour and the town of Cairns, with

the Inlet in the dim distance showing like a streak of silver. In the gardens, which are beautifully laid out, we recognise many tropical friends, such as cocoanuts, mangoes, and many varieties of bamboo.

The Kanakas on the plantation have roomy domiciles, and are in every way exceedingly well cared for; we have met whites who would have been thankful for half as much attention. They (the Kanakas) have three meals per diem, consisting of meat, bread, rice, potatoes, and tea, besides as much fruit as they have room or inclination for. When they are sick a doctor is paid to attend them. They are found in clothes, and have an excellent school, where a properly qualified teacher instructs them in the three R's. Some of the boys make good progress, and can read and write excellently. But where they come in really strong is in religion; they take to it like ducks to water, and hold prayer meetings and services whenever opportunity offers. A Kanaka service is a solemn business.

And this brings me to the principles of this much talked of, but little understood, Kanaka labour question. For some reasons I favour the retention of the Kanaka, for others I do not. But whether I do or do not, cannot alter the fact—and I assert it, knowing it to be true—that the majority of the boys themselves prefer plantation life in Queensland to life in their own proper island homes. This

is evidenced by the number of time-expired boys who sign for a second or even a third term. And pray, how does this read against the absurd stories of 'white slavery,' 'awful cruelty,' 'barbarous practices,' etc., etc.. published on the Kanaka labour question in England and elsewhere. It stands to reason that, if badly treated, they would be only too glad to get away. Then why do they re-engage?

While on this subject, let me say that the boys when newly arrived are designated 'new chums,' while every girl is invariably called 'Mary.' No Kanaka man or woman is recruited at a less sum than 6*l.* a year; but when a boy has re-engaged once or twice, and knows a little about his work, he can command a much higher wage, sometimes as much as 10*l.*, and not unfrequently more. And out of that they manage to save, for they are, as a rule, a thrifty people. In one district alone, of 3,000 Kanakas, something like seven hundred of them have savings bank deposits, the whole totalling over 3,500*l.* At the beginning of the year there were 8,627 islanders in Queensland, and their savings bank credits reached the large sum of 19,246*l.* How does your average labouring white man compare with that?

By his agreement, the planter has also to pay something like 20*l.* a head to the recruiting boat, 5*l.* as return passage money, 3*l.* Government capitation fee, and 1*l.* hospital capitation fee. He is also

compelled to supply his hands with rations and clothing as follows :

CLOTHING PER ANNUM.

Males (each).

Hats	2
Shirts (flannel)	4
Trousers, pairs (moleskin or serge)	4
Blankets, pairs	1

Females (each).

Chemises	4
Dresses (wincey)	4
Petticoats (flannel)	4
Hats	2
Blankets, pairs	1

RATIONS PER DIEM.

	lb. oz.
Bread or flour	2 0
Beef or mutton	1 8
Sugar	0 5
Tea	0 0 $\frac{1}{2}$
Potatoes (or rice 6 oz.)	3 0
Tobacco, per week	0 1 $\frac{1}{2}$
Salt	0 2
Soap, per week	0 4

From these few remarks it will be seen that the lot of the Kanaka in Queensland is not quite the slavery that it has sometimes been depicted !

Hambledon usually employs 35 white men, 200 Kanakas, 20 Cinghalese, and 25 Chinese. In 1888 it produced 1,030 tons of sugar from 700 acres of cane. In 1891, 1,180 tons from 943 $\frac{1}{2}$ acres, and in 1892, 1,465 tons from 950 acres. 1889 and 1890 were bad

seasons, when the cane was much infected with grubs, which destroyed the roots. 1892 was, however, a very good one, and this coming season promises equally favourable results.

The crushing season usually lasts six months, from the end of June to the end of December—a time of ceaseless activity for every soul on the plantation.

The varieties of cane grown are the Green Ribbon, Red Bamboo, and Cheriboa. The soil is a rich chocolate loam, and is easily ploughed by teams of two horses. Besides cane, a large area is planted with pine-apples, mangoes, and oranges.

Leaving Hambledon, we pass on to another plantation, Caravonica Park, the property of Mr. David Thomatis, before mentioned. It is situated between the Barron River and Thomatis Creek, the Ranges, and the sea coast, and has the wonderful new railway running beside it. It is in every way an ideal spot for a plantation, possessing as it does natural drainage, natural irrigation, the railway, and a soil not to be surpassed in Queensland, over 10 feet deep of black alluvial loam, composed mostly of decayed vegetable matter, and for bottom a pure sea gravel. The plantation has a frontage of one mile and a half to the deep waters of the superb River Barron; while on the north-eastern corner it touches the shores of Trinity Bay, whence Thomatis Creek runs inland.

The land was selected by the present owner, who, besides being an enterprising colonist, is an exceed-

ingly able agriculturist, a profound thinker, and a decided philanthropist. To him I am indebted for very much valuable information.

I am bound to admit that Mr. Thomatis has always shown himself a great opponent to Kanaka labour, not because he dislikes the islanders themselves, but because he has always cherished the hope of getting his blocks worked by white men. His stories of the first settlement of his land are most interesting. At the outset he leased a portion of it to Chinamen, each party taking at a moderate figure, on an average, ten acres. The Celestials, with their usual *savee*, went in mostly for bananas, and so great did this industry soon become that no less than 6,000 bunches (each containing about 20 dozen and weighing about 70 pounds) were exported weekly from the estate.

The first year of culture the tenant would perhaps realise 1s. or 1s. 6d. for each bunch, and reckoning that over 700 bunches an acre can be obtained yearly, a fair idea may be gained of the revenue to be derived therefrom. Since then, however, the price has fallen, and maize, ginger, and rice have taken the banana's place.

Among other things, Mr. Thomatis has great faith in the future of the Queensland rice industry. I submit an extract from the 'Cairns Post' (a bright and interesting little paper) upon the subject.

RICE CULTURE

IN NORTHERN QUEENSLAND.

SOME two years ago private experiments were made in rice-growing on the rich land fronting the Barron River near Cairns, North Queensland. This example was followed by several settlers near Port Douglas, about 50 miles northwards, and also at Mackay, with the result that the yearly yield was: at Cairns, 50·42; Port Douglas, 37·33; and Mackay, 38 bushels of rice per acre, which, at 9*l.* per ton for paddy or undressed rice, means a value of 22*l.* 10*s.* per crop to the acre, and reckoning at least two full crops a year the full annual value would be 45*l.* per acre! The results of these experiments were that within the last twelve months over 2,000 acres of virgin scrub along the Barron River, and only five miles from Cairns wharves, were cleared and planted, of which over 500 acres are situated in the fine large estate, Caravonica Park, owned by Mr. Thomatis, who both in the old country and in Queensland has always taken great interest in agriculture and in technology. This large tract of rich land, which had hitherto been lying idle, now became rich in orchards and gave employment to several hundreds of people, circulated money and wages, and created general wealth. A large steam mill was erected at Cairns, and it is believed that the shareholders, who are mostly the settlers themselves, will receive a net dividend of over 25 per cent. yearly. The Queensland Government lately put a Protective duty of 1*d.* per lb., or 9*l.* per ton, on imported Chinese rice; hence the Chinese residents throughout the colony have to consume Cairns rice and abandon the importation of China-grown rice, and all this without the price of the commodity being raised one farthing in the Queensland market. Of course the Chinese markets suffer, and the Chinese importers; but the country at large—agriculture and settlers—reap all the benefit.

This is an instance of the clear, palpable, practical advantage of the Protective policy. What has been done,

and is going on around Cairns, could be done in the districts of New South Wales. Those experts who have seen the Manning River district, where all around Taree, Wingham, and Coopersnook immense plains of moist soil exist, say that rice would thrive much better than corn, and yield at least its full yearly crop, without being injured by flood-waters, which would, indeed, benefit the rice in its growth. But our legislators must wake up and protect our rice-growers, as has been done in Queensland, against the rice grown in China. From statistics we gather that Queensland consumed nearly 5,000 tons of rice yearly, imported from China, which demand the Cairns farmers will entirely supply. A gentleman who knows much of rice culture in America and North Italy states that the seed should be sown just before the ear is expected to fall. In a fortnight it will germinate, and then for two months it can live and prosper best under water, thus turning into some useful purpose the heavy floods that now cause destruction to crops and ruin to farmers. Then, in two months more the crop is ripe to be cut and threshed. The rich land on the Manning River would yield a splendid yearly crop of two tons of paddy, which, on being dressed at the mill, would give 25 cwt. of clean rice, worth 28*l.*; 10 cwt. of skin, which can be used as winter food for horses, worth 3*s.* per bushel; and 5 cwt. of rice pollard, worth 4*s.* a bushel; total value of the yearly crop, per acre, about 40*l.*; besides the straw, which affords a splendid chaff for cattle.

Caravonica Park has now over 800 acres under cultivation—they are made up of bananas, rice, maize, ginger, &c., and are subdivided into about a hundred leases, each of which possesses a comfortable homestead. Off the same ground, three crops yearly may be obtained: rice, early in December, ripe in April; maize, first crop sown in May, and ripe in August; maize, second crop sown in August, ripe in November; after which rice is again sown.

Mr. Thomatis is nothing if not enterprising, and he is gradually settling his estate with Europeans on the *Metayer system*. A large number of Italians have already been located, and are making a good thing of it.

The idea of the *Metayer system* in vogue on this property is as follows: the landlord furnishes land, machinery, and implements; the tenant his labour and care. They share as follows: one-fifth goes to the former, and four-fifths to the latter, of all crops, after deducting the necessary seed for the next sowing. By this system, Mr. Thomatis hopes the country will gradually become populated with that Utopian class—a happy, independent, *thinking* yeomanry—whose children will have had an opportunity of gaining practical experience, which should stand them in good stead when they come to that age at which it will be necessary for them to strike out for themselves.

Cairns has but two seasons, the wet and dry, or, in other words, the rainy and the fine. The former extends from January to May, and the latter from May to December. During the rainy season, copious showers fall—sometimes for a week at a stretch—varied by bright, sunny days, with heavy rain at night. During this period, refreshing breezes blow almost continuously. In the fine weather the climate is simply a Paradise, deliciously cool nights and mornings, bright sunny days occasionally interspersed with showers, predominating. In 1890 the Cairns district was never more than seven days with-

out rain during the whole of the dry season. And I say, therefore, whosoever wishes to taste the delight of living, let him spend May, June, July, and August in North Queensland.

People suffering from weak constitutions, rheumatism, or asthma, should certainly try it. In fact, Providence has placed there, as if to signify the use they should be put to, the *Euphorbia pilulifera* for asthma, and the mango, paw-paw, and ginger for dyspepsia. In November and December the weather becomes too warm and oppressive for comfort, except to those inured to it by long residence. Once acclimatised, however, nothing more need be feared. Frost and cold are unknown, save only in a mild degree; and no more clothing is ever required than is agreeable to the sight. It is, indeed, a wonderful country.

After a brisk drive through the quaint tree-shaded streets of Cairns, and along the handsome Esplanade, with its lovely glimpses of the sea and of the heights of Cape Grafton rising to the right, we make for the railway station, to experience for ourselves some of the beauties and perils of this wonderful line.

We find the station a neat, well-made Government building, and the train which is to bear us on our adventurous journey is not behind it in point of completeness. A powerful engine, well-built carriages, perfect brakes (and they are needed)—everything required is there. We take our places, and the train winds slowly out of the station.

For the first mile or two the road lies through uninteresting jungle, where nothing but dark tree-stems, rotting vegetation, and evil-looking water greet the eye. But presently all this is left behind, and we emerge into the open country, to overlook plantations of all sizes and descriptions, whose different growths lie pleasantly basking in the warm sunshine of the tropical morning. Now and again we catch glimpses of the Barron River, flashing its way across the plain to the blue sea beyond. But we have small attention for such trivial things. We are too much occupied watching the marvellous and seemingly unscalable heights that lie before us. Every few minutes we stop at tiny wayside stations—charming little nooks nestling amid a wealth of vegetation that contrasts very pleasantly with the vulgar advertisements obtruding their painted faces from every notice-board.

Then, after a run of eight miles, we reach the famous second section, and commence our work of ascent.

The line to Kandy, which hitherto we had thought so wonderful, begins to fade into nothing compared with what is now before us. Twisting and twining through deep chocolate-coloured cuttings, across spider bridges, in and out of black tunnels, and through dense jungle, we creep from elevation to elevation, from seemingly impossible to possible. The growth on every side is marvellous: gigantic staghorns, and orchids of every shape and hue, gorgeous creepers, yellow hibiscus, wild ba-

nanas, paw-paw apples, granadillas, mix with palms of all varieties, many as much as 60 feet high (their graceful fronds gently swaying in the sunshine), wild nutmegs, indiarubber trees, kauri pines, red cedars, and, in fact, every possible description of foliage and vegetation is here. Lovely butterflies flit hither and thither, birds of wondrous plumage fly from tree to tree, while over all is the blue sky and the soft, warm, tropical sunshine.

As soon as the actual work of ascent is accomplished, the view loses its quieter loveliness, and becomes almost terrifying in its grandeur. We are now on the topmost heights of the Range, whence glimpses can be obtained of the plains deep down below. But, though our climbing is finished, the danger is not yet over. Sometimes we seem suspended in mid-air over yawning gulfs a thousand feet or more in depth, at the bottom of which, like a silver streak, flashes the ever-present Barron River. Looking down, an almost irresistible desire to hurl one's self from the window seizes one. And I can quite believe what I have been told, that not only scores of women, but many men, have been unable to refrain from crying at the view presented, and have been compelled to move to the other side of the carriage, so frightful is the sense of depth and utter helplessness that seizes one.

Presently we cross the Stony Creek Falls (see page 145), so close that the spray from the water wets the carriage windows. Then, as before, we dash on from loveliness to loveliness; till, more than

satisfied, we come to a halt at the clearing which does duty for a station, and have visible evidence before us that we are arrived at the terminus of the section.



BARRON FALLS AT LOW WATER

As we alight, a team of pack-mules, laden with tin from the Herberton mines, winds down the track, their bells jingling musically. And, later on, at the

x 2

small hostelry on the hillside, the stage coach, drawn by five panting horses, puts in an appearance, and pulls up at the door, when the driver, as if to lend an additional Bret Harte flavour to the incident, recounts his adventures with the floods further up the valley.

As soon as we have finished lunch, we make our way, along the railway line, to the nearest point to the falls, where commences a long descent into the valley below, the deep boom of the mighty waters being ever present in our ears. Then, suddenly, without warning, we step from the undergrowth into a full view of the Barron Fall—this stupendous work of nature. Even to remember it is sufficient to take one's breath away, and how to give an adequate description of it in words, I know not.

Imagine yourself standing on a mass of rock, with high jungle-covered hills rising, on either hand, *a thousand feet above your head*. Imagine yourself overlooking a river, in low water, perhaps a hundred and fifty yards in width, rushing headlong, tearing, racing in wildest confusion to hurl itself over the side of one of the most gigantic precipices the mind of mortal man can conceive, a precipice of solid rock a thousand feet or more in height. Then fancy that fall of water crashing with the roar of a mighty ocean—a roar that can be heard many miles away—deep down, down, down into a seething, boiling cauldron of whitest foam, lying small as a half-crown in the great abyss below, out of which rises continually a dense mist holding all the colours

of a king opal. Imagine all that and you have grasped but a hundredth part of its beauty. Everything resounds with the force and majesty of the fall. Its thunder is awful; its grandeur is terrific. It is five hundred feet higher than Niagara. It is more than that—it is surely without its equal upon the face of the known globe.

As we look, a gorgeous butterfly floats down the breeze. Passing us, his wings catch all the colours of the opal mist. For some unknown reason tears rise in our eyes. We have seen enough; we are satiated with loveliness. Let us get back to our boat before we are killed by sheer wonder at Nature's awful majesty!

CHAPTER IX

TOWNSVILLE—SEPARATION—THE FROZEN MEAT
TRADE—JAMES MORRIL

EXT morning, by
ten o'clock, we
were with-
in sight of
Townsville,
the far-
famed, and
also widely
advertised

capital of Northern Queensland when separation shall be granted. They are a pushing, ambitious people these Townsvilleites, almost American in their go-a-headness. And certainly they deserve to succeed. Considerable rivalry exists between Cairns and this latter place; each seems to fancy that the other is endeavouring to steal a march upon her. However, Townsville may certainly claim to be the most important town of the north; in fact, it may also claim the supremacy (if one excepts the capital, and perhaps Rockhampton) in all Queensland. It has, besides, many advantages over other competitors, and

is not slow to turn them to the best account. Of these advantages more anon.

Situated in Cleveland Bay, and sheltered by the bold outline of Cape Cleveland on the one hand and Magnetic Island on the other, Townsville commands a fine expanse of natural harbour ; while, now that the breakwater has been completed, vessels of large tonnage will be able to find a safe refuge inside the artificially-constructed one.

The town itself is not picturesque, being built on the banks of an insignificant stream, called Ross Creek ; but Castle Hill, where the fashionable suburb is growing up, presents a very agreeable appearance, and, if one can forget the exertion entailed by the climb to reach it, must be a pleasant spot in which to live.

As soon as we come to an anchor, and have collected our baggage, we descend to the launch and steam ashore. Arriving at the Wharf, we are persuaded to try the Imperial Hotel, and thither we accordingly direct our steps. One thing strikes us immediately : it is hot ; a muggy, steamy, oppressive heat, more like that of Singapore than any other, and almost insupportable. We express our opinion on the matter to a resident who accompanies us, but he immediately commences an elaborate explanation to prove that although the heat is—well, perhaps *warm*—nevertheless, there are so many other advantages about Townsville that such a small matter as the climate is hardly worth taking into consideration. We have heard the same argument before.

The Imperial Hotel proves all that can be desired, a commodious, pleasant place, admirably situated and managed. Like the majority of buildings in Queensland, it is constructed almost entirely of wood, a material which is found to be cooler, and of course much less expensive than either brick or stone. Fires, fortunately, are not of frequent occurrence, but when they *do* come along, half the town, as a rule, has to go.

There is an open-handed hospitality about Queens-



TOWNSVILLE FROM THE RIVER

landers that one seldom meets with elsewhere; a simple introduction, and often not even that, is sufficient to serve as a pretext for showering kindness after kindness upon visitors. Before we have been an hour in the place we are made to feel quite at home, and have accepted numerous offers from kind-hearted residents to make our stay pleasant.

After lunch we walk out and inspect the town. The main street is a fine thoroughfare flanked by good buildings, in many instances of quite imposing architecture. It follows the windings of Ross Creek,

and lies on the flat between that watercourse and Castle Hill. It is too steamy to hurry, so we stroll leisurely along, noting as we go how even in this little out-of-the-way spot everything is up to date. In spite of the much-talked-of depression in trade, business seems brisk enough; clerks hurry in and out of merchants' offices, most of the shops seem to have their fair share of customers, telegraph boys run hither and thither at speed quite unsuited to the climate, a labour agitator is gesticulating wildly to an attentive audience at a street corner, while now and again bronzed and bearded bushmen loiter by with every sign of being *down* on a much appreciated holiday.

Thanks to the courtesy of a resident, we are introduced to numerous influential citizens, to whose ideas on important subjects affecting North Queensland, and more particularly Townsville, we listen with unending interest. One thing strikes us, and that is the wonderful unanimity that exists in every mind on the vital subject of Separation, of which movement, be it remembered, Townsville is the head centre. The word is in everybody's mouth, and we, who are strangers and but little posted in such matters, wonder what on earth it all may mean. When we are more conversant with the subject it evolves itself into something like the following; but perhaps it would be better if I give the views of the special correspondent of the London 'Times'



A LABOUR AGITATOR

on the subject, who is better qualified to speak than I.

The politics of Queensland are so entirely the outcome of the development of its natural resources that to speak of them intelligently without first describing the country as it is, would be almost impossible. With few exceptions, the best men in the colony are employed in developing it. They are not in politics, and take little interest in political movements, unless the prosperity of the industry in which they are engaged is in some way affected. Most political questions have their origin in the material necessities of at least one section of the community. If these are or seem to be at variance with the interests of other portions of the community, the movement which springs from them becomes a subject for contest, which is more or less hotly and generally maintained in proportion to the number of people affected. No political interest is long sustained unless it involves material loss and gain. None can touch material advantage without becoming a matter of importance. A theory of federation falls dully on the public ear. The mass of the electorate is just as indifferent as it is willing to vote either way. But a question of coloured labour, which involves the life or death of the sugar industry, will bring a number of the most influential men in the country at fighting heat to the polls. Planters, of course, desire it; the mass of the mining population living and working in districts where white labour is perfectly possible are opposed to a practice which will, they believe, tend to lower alike the dignity of labour, and the rate of wages. The introduction of coloured races becomes a question between labour and capital, and is fought on that ground with certain modifications. Some of the labourers are beginning to promise the double advantage of encouraging a thriving industry which gives employment to a great deal of skilled white labour in the factories, and of passing individually from the condition of employed, in which they now are, to that of employers of the new cheap

labour, which under the small farming system they can easily become. On the other hand, some of the capitalists, who are not personally interested in tropical agriculture, are disposed to vote against the introduction of servile peoples upon a continent of which the population and the customs, notwithstanding the existence of a few aborigines, are for all practical purposes purely European. They fear that the small beginning may result in complications of such magnitude as those with which the United States are now called upon to deal.

If the conflict of interests between two sections of the community suffices to keep the question of coloured labour on the list of permanent political interests, and the same cause operates to keep reorganisation of the land laws and construction of railways to open the back countries also constantly before the public mind, it follows almost as a logical deduction that a question which involves the interests of all sections, no matter how much divided, of the community will rise to the rank of supreme and universal importance. There is but one such question in Queensland, and that one is the question of Separation. With the exception of perhaps one man, and that one the author of the Constitution Bill which has been just rejected by the Upper House, there is probably no one in Queensland who cares about the matter in the least on the ground of abstract politics. It is purely a question of practical interest, and in proportion as the interests of any influential body of the population are for the time being affected or not affected by the actual condition of affairs, Separation fever passes through its acute or falls into latent stages. The desire for Separation is always, and, so far as it is possible to judge, gains persistently in force and steadiness through the many fluctuations to which it is subject.

To understand the desire in its general lines it is only necessary to look at the map. Brisbane, in the southern corner, lying almost upon the boundary of New South Wales, decides the smallest details of government of Cape York. The

distance is very nearly the same as that from London to Gibraltar; the time which it takes with the present means of communication to go from Brisbane to the furthest point within the colony is within a few hours the same as the time which it takes to go from London to South Africa. Anti-Separationists contend that time and distance are alike annihilated by the electric telegraph, and that for practical purposes Brisbane is within five minutes' communication with Cape York and Burketown. It is hardly necessary to point out that there is an immense amount of business which cannot be transacted by telegraph. The fact that all Government stores are kept at Brisbane is in itself enough to indicate the serious inconvenience to which outlying centres are liable. And if distance alone could indeed be annihilated by the cheapness and rapidity of telegraphic communication, the map has still another natural cause of division to indicate. The tropic of Capricorn cuts the colony in two. No argument can unify the needs of a tropical and non-tropical community. Queensland alone of the Australian colonies has attempted the systematic development of the tropical part of her territory. She has, therefore, to deal alone with the questions which this development has raised, and it is not surprising if, in the endeavour to do so, she finds herself in opposition to the present experience of temperate Australia. Nor is it surprising if the tendency of the leading public men, cradled in Australian tradition, educated in Australian thought, should be opposed to the recognition of new necessities and the modification of constitutional customs which they seem to call for. It is with the utmost reluctance that such a man as Sir Samuel Griffith, whose mind is attuned to the Australian pitch, can reconcile himself to even the temporary admission of a class of labour which cannot claim or exercise the hitherto proudly vindicated Australian right of self-government. Concession in this respect has been forced upon him by the logic of facts. It is none the less distasteful. Any legislation which he might feel called upon to initiate with regard to it would all be of the safeguarding

preventive description which the spirit of compromise suggests. No boldly creative measure of the kind could ever be looked for from him or from any politician of his type and training. Tropical Australia has yet to breed its own public men, and this is very generally felt. Before it can do so there must be a tropical community. There will probably be many in the future. North Queensland claims the honour of being the first.

The elements of size and diversity of climatic conditions form the basis of the demand for Separation by the North and Central divisions. Before passing on to the details by which the demand is supported, it is worth while to glance at the map and realise that the subdivision which is asked for would create three colonies, each of them, roughly speaking, of about the size of France. Queensland, as it now exists, comprises 668,000 square miles. The proposed district of the Southern division would absorb about 190,000 square miles of this, the Central division would have 223,000 square miles, and the Northern division would take 255,000 square miles. Each division would have a share of sea-board and of back country, but the North, by its geographical conformation, would get from four to five times more sea-board than either of the other two divisions. The South would keep the rich agricultural districts of the Darling Downs. The North, by way of counterbalance, has the rich, though undeveloped, agricultural and mineral district of Herberton; and the Centre gets, behind Rockhampton, agricultural areas for which it claims that they are as good as any in the world. The respective populations of these three divisions are at present—South Queensland, 279,000; Central Queensland, 50,000; North Queensland, 81,000. Their relative representation in the Brisbane Parliament is—South Queensland, 45 members; Central Queensland, 11 members; and North Queensland, 16 members. On any question of taxation, distribution of revenue, expenditure of public money, raising of loans, land legislation, or other matters closely affecting the development of the country and touching the material interests

of the electorate, the North and Centre can be out-voted by the South. This at first sight may seem fair, in view of the difference between the population of the South and of the other two divisions combined. But there is another aspect of the question, upon which the North and Central divisions lay great stress. They contend that, while the greater number of people live in the pleasanter residential quarter of the South, the wealth of the colony is produced in much larger proportion in the North and Centre; consequently that the North and Centre ought to have at least an equal voice in legislation which affects it. Here are the figures of the export trade by which this argument is supported:—The total value of the export trade of Queensland for last year was 6,890,864*l.* The value of the contributions from the different divisions were: from the South, 2,032,196*l.*; from the Centre, 2,232,446*l.*; and from the North, 2,626,222*l.* That is to say, the export trade of the South was not only relatively but actually smaller than that of either of the other two divisions. The total value of the import trade of Queensland was 4,592,357*l.* Of this the respective values were:—To the South, 2,956,406*l.*; to the Centre, 666,418*l.*; to the North, 1,200,059*l.* The exports, consisting generally of natural produce, either mineral, pastoral, or agricultural, are considered by the people of the colony as the wealth by which their bills are paid. The imports represent the objects for which the bills are presented; or, in other words, imports are the value received for exports. Considered in this light, the fact that the South contributes the smallest amount to the exports and receives the largest amount of imports, appears to the other two divisions as a very significant aggravation of their grievance. They hold that they are in their public capacity paying the cost of all those luxuries which contribute to make life in the Southern division more agreeable, and consequently more attractive to population, than life in the Northern and Central divisions of the colony, and that they are by this means forced to maintain against themselves the voting majority which ignores their necessi-

ties, cripples their trade, and lives upon what are still the indestructible results of their greater energy and wealth. The large proportion of the public loans which has been spent in the development of the South, the want of interest and lack of knowledge which are displayed by the Government at Brisbane in relation to the affairs of the North and Centre, and the damage consequently suffered by the industries of these two divisions, are the proofs upon which the accuracy of this view of the situation is based. It is impossible to travel through the North and Centre without realising the acute nature of the irritation to which the situation gives rise. The interests which are affected are too important to sit silent under the injustice, and, as they grow year by year in volume and vigour, it is presumable that they will be less and less disposed to tolerate the continuance of present conditions.

The details of which the two divisions complain have been so often embodied in petitions and addresses which have been laid before the public, that it is unnecessary to enter into them any further here. The matter of interest is the remedy proposed. None seemed possible but Separation, for the reason that it was not feasible under any constitutional form of English self-government to redistribute the voting power of the Queensland House of Assembly in such a way as to give equal influence to the small populations of the North and Centre, and the relatively large population of the South. The principle of a property or intelligence vote on such a scale is foreign to all our institutions. Communities of which the conditions are so dissimilar that it is within the power of 50,000 individuals in the one, to produce more surplus wealth for export than can be produced by 279,000 individuals in the other, evidently call for a different basis of representation. But the dissimilarity of conditions which exist between North Queensland and South Queensland is typical of a dissimilarity between tropical Australia and temperate Australia, which there is a very natural reluctance on the part of temperate Australia to face. Hitherto there has been only Southern Queensland and there has been only

temperate Australia. The change which is desired foreshadows a much greater change than is involved in a mere readjustment of balance between the interests of 81,000 people and 279,000 people. The creation and development of Northern Australia follows too evidently upon the creation and development of Northern Queensland for a politician of Sir Samuel Griffith's Australian experience to ignore the importance of the difficulties with which it has fallen to his lot to deal. His Constitutional Bill embodied an endeavour to grant all the reasonable advantages of Separation without conceding a dangerous independence. In framing it there can be little doubt that its author regarded the subject from the standpoint of Australian rather than of merely local politics. It represents a fine attempt to conciliate the conflicting interests of a part of the community with the whole. It fails only because the interests of the whole are so much more dominant in his mind than those of the suffering part that it grants no remedy to the fundamental evil. It proposed to create, in the first instance, three, in its revised form only two, provinces, ruling themselves in certain local matters, but subject to a Central Government. The disproportionate representation of North, South, and Centre remains just where it was as regards the supreme Government, and when the Bill comes to be examined in detail it will be found that every matter of importance is reserved for the decision of the supreme Government. All that it offers to the provinces is municipal organisation of an extremely expensive kind. This did not meet their requirements, and a memorandum of objections, drawn up by the Townsville Separation League, shortly summarises the principal grounds for the rejection of the Bill. The right reserved to the central Government to borrow money upon the credit of the united provinces deprives each province of the right, which it would gain by Separation, to raise loans as a first charge upon its revenue for its own development, and lays it open to a continuance of the old injustice in the matter of the distribution of the benefits of public loans. The reservation of the control of

the Customs tariff prevents any province from entering into such free trade conventions as would, it is believed, be profitable to colonies which have everything to export and nothing to protect; the control of railway tariffs prevents them from utilising the high profits from the main Northern and Central lines to write off the capital of their railways if they are so disposed, and reduce the burden upon the colony to the mere cost of working expenses. These lines, it is pointed out, are the two paying lines of Queensland. The regulation of the immigration of persons not of the European race, and the control of the affairs of people of any race who are not included under the laws applicable to the general community, are of course directly intended to prevent the North from making any such laws with regard to the introduction of cheap alien labour as might be judged desirable for the development of its tropical agriculture. To have the questions of public loans, customs, railways, and coloured labour, besides many other less essential points, retained for the decision of the Southern majority, was to gain little for the North, and the conclusion of the committee of the Separation League was that:

‘The burdens placed on the North under the 34 clauses dealing with matters assigned to the united provinces would be too heavy to bear, and that the relief, if relief it can be called, offered in the eighteen clauses dealing with the matters assigned to the Legislatures of the separate provinces falls so very short of complete self-government that the North is justified in refusing it. And we further say that to assume such an expensive form of government as that foreshadowed in the proposals, with its one Governor, three Lieutenant-Governors, eight Houses of Parliament, and four Civil Services, with no guarantee of increased revenue, would be little short of ruin for Queensland; while, if Territorial Separation were granted, increased prosperity to both portions of the colony—the result of better government—would more than cover any additional expenditure.’

The scheme, in its subsequently-amended form of two

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provinces, was rejected by the public opinion of the North for the same reason, that, instead of granting the self-government demanded by diversity of conditions, it maintained government by a southern majority on all points of essential importance. The objection is so fundamental that even if the Bill had passed through the Brisbane Parliament it was foredoomed to failure in application. The Central division obtained nothing by the new Bill, for the Centre remained by its provisions attached to the South, and the evidences of feeling on the subject which met the Governor during his late tour may be taken as an indication of the boiling-point of indignation to which Separatist opinion has risen in Rockhampton and the minor Central towns. Addresses praying for separation were presented to him at almost every stopping-point of his progress, and in Rockhampton at the time there was literally no other subject of conversation possible. Men and women alike appeared to guide all their actions by the effect which they might have upon the prospects of Separation. Rockhampton is the cradle of the Separation movement, which first originated there in 1866. The sense of grievance of the Centre is no less acute than that of the North. It claims that in the last 30 years more than 2,500,000*l.* of its Customs duties have been appropriated by the Southern Government; that since the construction of the railway line the whole profit of the Central Railway has gone into the Brisbane Treasury; that a yearly surplus from its general revenue goes also into the Brisbane Treasury; that the sale of its public lands is conducted in a manner of which it totally disapproves, and that these valuable assets are rapidly disappearing, while the proceeds of the sale go to enrich the Southern division. The alteration of the Customs tariff, rendered necessary in Southern opinion, partly by the decreasing revenue of the South, and partly in order to protect the embryo of Southern manufactures, presses no less heavily to the disadvantage of the Centre than to the disadvantage of the North. With all this, added to the consciousness of having endeavoured to

obtain Separation before the North was in existence, the Centre has no doubt some cause for a feeling of exasperation, when it sees its claims ignored and itself excluded from even the very partial measure of relief which the Government had declared itself willing to offer to the North.

So far I have endeavoured only to recapitulate the case for Separation as it is felt to exist by the advocates of the movement. It would be difficult, I think, for anyone to travel through the North and Centre without realising that it is very strong—so strong as to be practically irresistible if a determined majority of the always increasing population persists in the demand for it. But in presence of the almost unanimously expressed objection to the compromise embodied in Sir Samuel Griffith's Provincial Bill, the question arises, how came the Bill to be accepted by almost all the Northern members? In seeking for the answer it becomes clear that the demand for separation has not been up to the present time the persistent demand of a united majority. There have been large majorities in favour of it—the mass of public opinion probably gives at this moment a large majority in favour of it—but the absence of political ideals, and the substitution in their place of a simple practical regard for material interests, has operated to prevent any systematic co-operation between different sections of the population. A little while ago the interests of the sugar industry were very seriously affected by the labour legislation of the Brisbane Parliament. Separation seemed at that time to sugar planters the only hope of escape from ruin. The whole sugar industry was for the moment actively Separationist; but the mining industry, fearing that Separation would involve the indiscriminate admission of coloured labour, with a consequent fall in the rate of wages, stood by the South, and their vote overpowered the planters. At this moment the mining industry is ruffled by the tax of 25 per cent. which has been imposed upon mining machinery purely in the interests of the South, and I was told at Charters Towers that not only was every man of intelligence and

education in favour of Separation, but that if a poll of the town were taken Separation would be carried by an immense majority of the working population. Just now, however, the repeal of the prohibitory law with regard to Kanakas has soothed the sugar industry to a condition of quiescence. It is in favour of Separation in the abstract, but is no longer keen or active. Political agitation generally interferes with material prosperity. So long as no material want is pressing, the inclination is to let the matter alone. And thus it happens that, while each industry in turn feels the spur, there has not yet been that long pull and the strong pull all together which alone can bring about a successful political reconstitution. The fluctuating sentiment of constituencies has, of course, been reproduced in the members who have represented them at Brisbane, and there has been a lack of unanimity in the Northern votes, which created a general predisposition for compromise. To this must be added the fact that all the strongest feeling about Separation is concentrated upon the event in the mining and agricultural centres. The great wool-producing back country cares little or nothing either way. It has the principal lines of railway that it needs. It likes the favourable terms upon which it has obtained public lands. The capital which it represents is largely foreign capital, with no personal or sentimental interest in the colony, and on the whole, it rather fears that the tendency of subdivision would be to put the smaller local Parliaments dangerously under the influence of democratic ideas. The pastoral industry, as I have endeavoured to show in an earlier letter, is bound to consider first the interests of capital. The agricultural and mining industries are, so far as these mischievous distinctions have any application, representative of the interests of labour. It is likely enough, therefore, that the vote of the pastoralists generally would be given against any disturbance of existing conditions. Upon all these disintegrating causes there fell the fiat of the Imperial authorities that the demand for Separation ought to come through the already established Legislature of the

colony. The most ardent Separationists of the North and Centre could see no hope in view of their numerical inferiority in the House of Assembly, and the fluctuating nature of the support upon which they could count outside, of carrying any proposal for complete Territorial Separation through the Brisbane Parliament. They had reason to believe that Sir Samuel Griffith's scheme would obtain the support of a sufficient number of Southern members to insure its passing, and though the very conditions which commanded the support of the South were the conditions which made it inadequate and unpalatable to the North, Northern members decided to accept it on the principle of half a loaf being better than no bread. In doing so they incurred the very strong displeasure of their constituents, and the final rejection of the Bill by the Upper House has been received by the general public of the North with, I think I may say, universal and hearty satisfaction. Everyone feels himself to be well rid of a scheme which nobody liked, and the ground is now clear to fight the question on its true issues. The approaching general election will be the battlefield. If the North and Centre return a large majority in favour of Separation, the full weight which attaches to any emphatic expression of public opinion ought to be given to their endeavours to obtain the reform they need by the only constitutional means which are open to them. For it is a very essential factor of the situation that every reason which impels the North to seek Separation is a reason binding upon the South to oppose Separation, and though the North and Centre should vote to a man in favour of a change their united members number only 27 against 45 in the House, through which their prayer to the Imperial Government must get itself passed in the form of a Bill. Unless some great change of opinion can be brought about in the South, it is practically an impossibility for any Separation Bill to pass both Houses of the Brisbane Legislature. The clearer the issues become, the more insuperable will be the difficulty. This fact is recognised in the North, where men ask with

something like despair, 'How is it possible for us to comply with the Imperial condition?' The answer for the present may fairly be that the first thing which has to be done by the North and Centre is to place on record, by the result of their elections, an irrefragable testimony that there does exist among their populations an overwhelming desire for the privilege and responsibility of self-government. If they cannot sink mutual jealousies and surmount passing causes of indifference sufficiently to bring all the forces that make for Separation into line, and so to insure this result, they cannot claim to be yet ready as a people for the exercise of the functions of a separate political existence. Nor can it be a matter of wonder or regret to anyone who is in full possession of the facts that the Imperial Government should move with the greatest caution towards the creation of a colony which, if it contains, indeed, the elements of future greatness that North Queensland believes itself to contain, represents nothing less than the first step in the revolution of the hitherto accepted principles of Australian constitutional life. The erection of North Queensland into a separate colony will be equivalent to a decision that tropical Australia is to be developed. A glance at the map of the southern continent is enough to demonstrate the importance of such a decision. —*The Times*.

Taken as a whole and considering that its age is but slightly over thirty years, Townsville is a very wonderful little place. Of course there can be no blinking the fact that it is greatly dependent for its existence on the enormous pastoral West, and more still from being the port of the Charters Towers Gold Fields, situated eighty-two miles inland; but still, I repeat, it is a wonderful little place! Nobody with such evidence before him can deny that.

To return to a pleasant subject—Townsville hos-

pitality. During the afternoon, in company with a member, we visit the Townsville Club. It is a neat little building, in a street off the main thoroughfare. There is the same air, the same homeliness about it, that attracts one in similar institutions in London, Cape Town, Melbourne, Colombo, Hong Kong, Auckland, or anywhere else where Englishmen do congregate. The talk hangs, in the same way, round each man's occupation; but here there is an impression of being intimately acquainted with each other's most private concerns, that is not quite like the clubs of other places. While we are its guests, faint rumours drift in upon us of droughts in the far West, of shearing troubles in the back country, of gold and silver mining news, with all of which things we are to become better acquainted later on. Everything seems perfectly familiar excepting a few little phrases which we cannot, for the life of us, understand. Presently, in our turn, we make use of a word of common significance in the East. There is a polite stare and we see that *we* are not understood. That is the only difference!

Leaving the club as the sun is setting, we climb Castle Hill and admire the view. It is indeed beautiful. Below us, to our right, lies the town, with its acres of whitewashed, galvanised iron roofing, while on the plain, in front of us, are the botanical gardens, the gaol, the fine building of the grammar school, and, beyond that, the calm water of Cleveland Bay, shimmering like silver in the distance. The view is well worth the long climb.

Early next morning a resident calls with a buggy and pair of horses, and we are whirled out of town in a cloud of dust, to see the new meat works, then in course of construction, at Alligator Creek. The drive is a pretty one, and at the end of about twenty minutes, we ford the Creek and draw up at what will eventually be the entrance to the works.

Once inside, we are soon able to derive a good idea of the importance of the industry which these enormous premises are being formed to undertake. The buildings cover an immense area of ground, and run for some distance along the Creek. The scene is one of ceaseless activity. On one side, huge brick kilns are hard at work, while gangs of men are employed stacking the bricks; on the other, men are digging foundations, while more again are engaged upon the construction of the buildings themselves.

Here, we are told, the cattle will be driven in; there is the race which will lead them to their doom; this is the place of execution; while this is the tramway that will convey the carcasses to the freezing chambers. Everything seems most complete, and after a brief survey of certain written facts, we quite concur in the belief that it is destined to be a gigantic enterprise.

In fact, the prospects of the frozen meat trade with England are, with the other matters I mentioned just now, among the most widely discussed subjects of the neighbourhood.

That night we dine out, and after dinner, while we smoke in the verandah, our hostess, who is a lady

of many accomplishments, proceeds to the piano, and among other pieces, plays the waltz refrain of that hackneyed, but still beautiful, little song, 'Some Day.' I close my eyes, and what pictures the music conjures up! At first it is a moonlight night in England, and, I think, on Bournemouth pier, a band is playing, and the clatter of promenading shoe-heels seems to keep time with the music. The next moment I am whisked away across some thousands of miles of sea, to a creeper-covered verandah in Adderly Street, Cape Town, where some one is singing to the accompaniment of a guitar; then there is a change, and it is a ball in Government House, Adelaide. But when I open my eyes it is neither England, Cape Town, nor Adelaide that I see before me, but Townsville, North Queensland, and I am looking across the plain with its twinkling lights, to where the moon is just rising over a headland of Magnetic Island.

By the way, there is a strange story connected with Townsville, many years before it was known to civilisation, a story which seems almost too strange for credence. It appears that as far back as 1846, a ship, the 'Peruvian,' was wrecked on the Minerva shoal, several hundred miles to the southward. As many as twenty-one souls, including a woman, took to a raft, on which they drifted for no less than forty-two days. By some inexplicable means, they managed to cross the Barrier Reef, but only seven lived to see the land of Cleveland Bay: the captain, his wife, the sail-maker, a sailor named James Morril, the cabin boy, and two others. The last two died

soon after landing. When they had been ashore a few days the sail-maker deserted, while the rest eked out a pitiful existence on such shell-fish, etc., as they could discover.

This state of things lasted for many weeks, until, just as life was becoming insupportable, they were succoured in a strange and mysterious fashion. For some time past the Blacks in that district had noticed, with considerable alarm, the presence in the sky of innumerable shooting stars, which invariably fell in the same direction. Now, one of their most cherished superstitions appears to have been that, when meteors were numerous and always fell towards one point, it meant the presence of an enemy in that particular direction.

Setting out with the intention of carrying war into the enemy's country, they found and, instead of killing, succoured these unfortunate white folk. It was a strange enough fact that, with the exception of the captain's wife—who, from all accounts, was treated with the usual indignity shown by the Blacks to their own womankind—they were not ill-used. But, as time wore on, one by one they drifted apart, died or were killed, till only the sailor, James Morril, was left, and his history is, perhaps, the strangest of all. Here, there, and everywhere, for seventeen long years he wandered with the tribe, coming more and more to forget his nationality and mother tongue. Hunting, fishing, travelling, and fighting, he lived with his captors, till one morning, old and infirm, he chanced upon a token of frontier civilisation in the

shape of a stockman's hut. Then, suddenly, just as the occupants were about to fire upon him, taking him for a dangerous character, his memory came back to him, and he called upon them in their own tongue, and so saved his life.

The scene of the landing of that raft's crew is now the important city of Townsville, and where James Morril once wandered, will be found thriving farms and all the evidences of an ever-increasing civilisation.

The following were the exports from Townsville for 1891 :—

	£
Gold	836,699
Wool	632,242
Sugar	26,458
Preserved meats	22,450
Totalling	1,569,459

The imports for the same period amounted to 538,701*l*.

These figures show plainly the prosperity of the place, and, with the hoped for rise in wool, the Alligator Creek Works in good working order, and Charters Towers' unlimited wealth, Townsville may certainly say that she possesses a good claim to the title of 'the Capital of the North.'

CHAPTER X

*CHARTERS TOWERS—MINES—CHINESE—‘THE ONLY’
SMITH—GILBERTON—GEORGETOWN—ETHERIDGE AND
CROYDON GOLD FIELDS*



OR various reasons we were particularly anxious to see the famous Charters Towers Gold

Fields. Accordingly, at 7.30 on the morning following our ‘dining out,’ we paid our bill, caught the early

train for the Towers, and plunged inland, bidding ‘good-bye’ to old Father Ocean, hitherto so much associated with our wanderings.

The line over which we journeyed is an excellent piece of workmanship, solid and enduring, while the scenery along the route is picturesque and thoroughly Australian. Now and again we halted at tiny road-

side stations, not like stations in the East, or even at Cairns, but generally galvanised iron abominations, built some distance from the line, and partaking more of the nature of wayside grog shanties than anything else. One by one we dropped all evidences of civilisation behind us, and began to think that at last we were becoming immersed in the fascinations of that mysterious region, the Australian bush. Every time the train came to a standstill, brown lanky urchins, unmistakably bush children, sauntered out from among the cluster of habitations to stare at us. Strange little products these, differing entirely from the children of the towns, being quiet and self-contained, as if they have absorbed something of the silence of the regions in which they live. We tried our wit on them in vain; nothing—not even our brilliant satire on ‘The Ends and Aims of Imperial Federation’—astonished them.

Leaving Townsville behind us, we wound round the base of Mount Elliot, an imposing elevation, from which a fine view of the surrounding country may be obtained, and proceeded for many miles in an almost due southerly direction. About half way to the Towers, in a galaxy of romantic scenery, we threw off a branch line to Ravenswood, a small but important mining township to the southward, boasting its own banks, hospital, etc., and a population of 1,167 souls. A little later the line crossed the Burdekin River, by means of what seemed to us a most dangerous bridge, technically termed a ‘jump

up.' The bridge itself is a stout wooden construction, placed for the sake of floods very little above water level. The descent on one side, and the ascent on the other, are very steep; so steep, in fact, that on approaching it steam is shut off altogether, and the impetus the train gathers on the descent is quite sufficient to carry it up to the level country on the other side. The river itself is a dull, muddy-looking stream, with thickly timbered mangrove banks, suggestive of mosquitoes and innumerable horrors. Shortly after crossing it we sighted Charters Towers ahead, and at the end of a most enjoyable journey, brought up in a neat, well-built, commodious station, wearing quite a metropolitan air. So we were not out of civilisation after all!

Charters Towers is a name of world-wide fame, a name to conjure with. As far as scenic beauty goes, however, the town appeared to us disappointing. It is situated on a vast, almost treeless plain, upon which the sun glares for twelve hours out of every twenty-four with all his might, majesty, dominion, and power. Somehow the inhabitants do not seem to mind it at all. And here let me unburden myself of some facts. The population of the municipality itself is 4,597, and that of the district something like 18,825 — all believers in Charters Towers.

Leaving the railway station and passing into the street, the fact was undeniably borne in upon us that we were in a place where men were pushing and

alive, a place where everything was working at high pressure.

On all sides we could see evidences of the go-a-head nature of the town. As evidence, let me instance three daily newspapers and one weekly, the latter—‘The North Queensland Register’—a bright, sparkling production quite up to date, five



churches, eight banks, numerous schools, and a commodious hospital.

Rising above the housetops on every hand are innumerable poppet heads of mines; in fact, everything is mining, even the children in the streets talk and play it. Whereas, in other places, the boys and girls amuse themselves burning their fathers and mothers in effigy, or kindred sports, the Charters Towers kiddies work bogus claims and ‘rig the

market.' They must find it very useful when they come to man's estate.

The roar of five hundred stampers, grinding quartz, assails the ear continually, shifts of miners thread the streets, and if you see two men talking at a corner, it's half-a-crown to a farthing that their conversation has something to do with the interminable industry of the place.

In 1892 no less than 211,605 ounces of gold were obtained from this field, and as the best results have been obtained at the lowest levels, a still greater future may be looked forward to.

Certainly the chief mine at Charters Towers, if not one of the greatest in the world, is the famous 'Day Dawn,' which in 1889 was sold to an English company for no less a sum than 640,000*l*. It is a marvel of engineering, digging, and carpentering skill. The stopes and tunnelling strike one as being endless, and the wealth of the mine itself is only exceeded by the courtesy of the folk connected with it.

Among the 113 mines in the district the most notable are the Victory, Mills United, Brilliant, Brilliant and St. George, Craven's Caledonia, Victoria, Golden Gate, Mosman Company's, Brilliant Block, and No. 7 N.E. Queen, each of which turned out more than 400 ounces of gold in January last. The January yield of 1892 (entire field) for 14,902 tons of quartz was 16,675 ounces of gold, making an increase for 1893 of 224 tons for 2,726 ounces of gold: a remarkable and verified fact.

The following were the dividends paid by different mines for the month of January, 1893 :

	£	s.	d.
Mills United, 2 of 3 <i>d.</i>	7,500	0	0
Victory, 2 <i>s.</i>	5,000	0	0
Golden Gate, 6 <i>d.</i>	3,750	0	0
Victoria, 6 <i>d.</i>	3,600	0	0
Brilliant, 3 <i>d.</i>	3,125	0	0
Mosman G. M. Co., 3 <i>d.</i>	2,312	10	0
Brilliant and St. George United, 3 <i>d.</i>	1,800	0	0
Craven's Caledonia, 3 <i>d.</i>	1,250	0	0
	28,337	10	0

In 1891 no less than 2,800 miners were employed on the fields. The amount of quartz crushed was 174,486 tons, yielding 222,882 ounces of gold. At present the number of distinct reefs proved to be gold bearing is over 450, while the extent of auriferous ground worked is 120 square miles.

The following are the returns from some of the reefs within the past year :

The Brilliant has crushed 21,328 tons, yielding 26,605 ounces, and paid in dividends 75,000*l.*; the Day Dawn P.C. has crushed 27,416 tons, yielding 27,479 ounces, and paid in dividends 37,500*l.*; Mills United has crushed 24,002 tons, yielding 21,611 ounces, and paid in dividends 26,250*l.*; Day Dawn Block has crushed 13,635 tons, yielding 20,414 ounces, and paid in dividends 24,920*l.*; Golden Gate has crushed 10,169 tons, yielding 16,059 ounces, and paid in dividends 18,600*l.*

The value of the machinery alone is estimated at no less a figure than 199,381*l*.

It is strange how mere association with wealth gives one a feeling of affluence. We were in a place of gigantic fortunes, where men no longer talked in hundreds, but in thousands, tens of thousands—nay, even in millions. This was catching; we developed all the symptoms of the millionaire disease ourselves. We began to feel a wild desire to spend our money, to endow churches, hospitals, etc., to do something to alleviate distress (none of which we saw around us), to make this great world better and purer by our noble actions, to prove that to possess money is not merely a distinction or an honour, but that on the other hand ——— But here the reflection that with us money was worse than scarce dawned upon us, and we decided to withhold our ideas on this subject until we were better able to carry them out. It behoved us to devote our attention to the consideration of what we were going to do next!

We wanted to reach Normanton, but we had not the very remotest idea how to manage it. We did not like asking strangers, because we had an objection to being taken for new chums. So biding our opportunity, we put the question to a poor unoffending Chinaman whom we caught loafing about. We said politely: ‘John, you will excuse the liberty we are taking, but we are desirous of reaching Normanton, a town of which you may probably have heard mention made. It has many advantages, and is situated on the shores of the Gulf of Carpentaria.’ John

simply answered, 'Eugh.' We repeated the question, struggling with our politeness. 'Pardon my not making it sufficiently clear to you; I say we are desirous of transporting ourselves to the town of Normanton, situated, so we are led to believe, on the Norman River, which flows into the Gulf of Carpentaria. You, being an itinerant rogue and vagabond of the first water, will probably have journeyed that way; we therefore pray you with accelerated despatch to ——'

But that 'accelerated despatch' was too much for John; he quivered like an aspen leaf, shook his head violently, snorted, and then, blurting out 'No savee,' departed quickly in the direction of the nearest hen-roost.

Talking of hen-roosts and Chinamen brings me to vigorous journalism. I clip the following from the 'North Queensland Register':

There is no false pride about a Chinaman. If he offends against the law, and has the misfortune to be found out, he does not consider that his punishment lowers him in the social scale, and he is even more affable than ever. The present Warden of Charters Towers was once the recipient of a little delicate explanation, for which he was grateful. A gardener, named Ah Chong, was brought up, charged with stealing fowls from the hospital, and as he was caught in the fowl-house with his booty in a bag, the well-meant exertions of an interpreter and half a dozen of his countrymen were unavailing, and Ah Chong was sent up for six months' hard labour. Some twelve months after, an important Chinese case came on, and among the crowd of witnesses and interested partisans was Ah Chong, who on going into the box, greeted the P. M. with a friendly smile. On being asked

what he did for a living, he appeared to consider the question irrelevant, and turning to the P. M. said, ' You know me, Mr. Mowblee; me steal 'em fowls.' Friendly relations were at once established between the Bench and the witness, and the case proceeded.

While on the subject of pithy journalism on ' The Chinese Question ' let me give one more clipping, which, to my mind, for general information and picturesque detail stands alone :

The Georgetown correspondent of ' The Townsville Bulletin ' says that ' during the past fortnight ten pig-tailed denizens left that town *en route* for the Flowery Land, with coin amounting to 2,000*l.* Mr. — by means of irrigation is raising vegetables in his town garden far superior in size and quality to those produced by Chinamen. Rain fell last week to the extent of 0·40 in. within a radius of ten miles, and was local and partial at that.'

But I am wandering from my subject. We wished to reach Normanton, and there were only two ways of getting there. One was by continuing our railway journey to Hughenden (a township two or three hundred miles further West), and then travelling North about three hundred miles; the other was by going across country *via* the Etheridge, Georgetown, and Croydon Gold Fields, and thence by train into Normanton. Without doubt the latter was the better way, and we decided, if we could but find the means, to attempt it. It would be necessary for us to have a companion who could act as a guide, and after considerable questioning and hunting about, we

were fortunate enough to find the very description of man we wanted. He was due to set out for Georgetown the following day: I say *due*, because he had been going for some weeks past. His name was Smith—John George Smith—and he claimed to have relations of that name in England. He did not tell us this when we first saw him, for obvious reasons, which he afterwards explained quite easily. At the time of our introduction he was lying on the footpath of a side street, with black ants crawling in and out of his ears. Ribald boys had painted his nose white, and drawn a skull and crossbones on the top of his bald head.

The first thing next morning he came round to see us, and after he had satisfactorily answered a

few questions, we decided to set out on our journey together. He said he knew the track perfectly, and would put us in the way of all the best grog shanties along the road. We were properly grateful, and asked him to name his beverage. 'Gin and brandy,' he replied; and then, noting our astonishment, went



'THE ONLY' SMITH

on to inform us that when he had been in the 'Royal Bender' (*Anglicè*, 'drinking bout'), 'he always took 'em together—one to see the other by.'

By his advice, that same afternoon we attended a horse sale, and secured four medium horses—two for saddle and two for packs—at fair rates. Our companion was graciously pleased to say that they were 'none too dusty,' and we felt it was something to have earned even his good opinion.

Next morning, with the eyes of all the world upon us, arrayed in spotless moleskin breeches and Crimean shirts, we mounted our gallant steeds, and passed out of the stable yard down the street, bound for Normanton, 'the only' Smith in command.

The less said about that journey the better. There never was a greater mistake made than calling it a good track, and no greater fraud ever undertook it than 'the only' Smith, our guide, philosopher, and supposed friend. The track was in reality no track at all—only a series of bridle paths from drinking ken to drinking ken. We explained this to 'the Only,' but he laughed and said 'it was just down to his mark' (that was his sinful way of putting it), 'and if we didn't like it we might clear out and find another for ourselves. He could get on quite well without us.' As we couldn't get on without him, we withdrew our opposition, and thereby made ourselves his slaves for ever.

Our route lay *via* Dalrymple, Eumara, Nulla Nulla Station, Craigie, and across the Razor Back, or Great Dividing Range, to the Newcastle River,

then skirting Mount Rous to Gilberton, a distance, in and out, of little short of two hundred miles. Leaving Gilberton (which, by the way, is one of the most promising, though least developed, goldfields of Queensland), we headed through terrible country towards Georgetown, nearly a hundred miles due north.

By this time we were getting accustomed to the monotony of the bush and also to the existence of 'the Only.' Among other disadvantages he was an accomplished though melancholy liar. At times he was past all rousing, took no interest in anything, preferred letting us do all the work, cook, wash, run up the horses in the morning, and on occasion even saddle and pack them, unassisted. There was no pride about 'the Only,' not enough to cover a button with, but he made up for it all by the brilliance of his imagination. When the stars were shining, and nothing but his voice, the crackling of the camp fire, or the drowsy tinkling of distant horse bells, broke the quiet, he came out of his shell. Then, in a voice that never changed, he'd wander half round the world, inventing visits to the uttermost parts, and lying with a consistency that would have been truly admirable in any other cause. It was his custom to commence the evening with a jovial hail-fellow-well-metsort of air, giving one the impression that he'd been every where, seen everything, and was indeed a desperate dog.

By-and-by he would remember circumstances connected with the time he was on the African diamond fields, or may be piloting cotton boats up and down the Mississippi; which would bring him to

the days when he was starving in San Francisco, or recklessly bloodthirsty with Balmaceda, in Chili, conducting native states in Rajputana, or resisting Russian tyranny in the salt mines of Siberia. It was all the same to him; he was brilliantly mendacious all over the known universe. It may be interesting to mention here that he was a Sydney Side native, and had never been out of the Colonies in his life.

Towards the end of the evening he would usually become sympathetic and repentant, would regret his fall from high estate, and lament that one of his birth and education should 'come down' to such a position in the world. Then in the hush of night, with the wind sighing softly through the trees overhead, he would whisper the fact that he was none other than the eldest son of the Duke of —, unlawfully kept out of his property by designing relatives; next night it would probably be the Duke of —; the next, the Marquis of —, or perhaps the Earl of —. It did not matter a farthing who it was; he seemed to have a plurality of fathers, and at least he was consistent in one thing: he never chose any but the highest members of the aristocracy to be the authors of his being. We began to weary of 'the Only' and his parents; if he'd had a little less pedigree and a little more energy we should have been a great deal better satisfied. But I am wandering off the track again.

Georgetown, the centre of the Etheridge Gold Fields, is a strange little township, built on the usual Queensland bush pattern, wooden houses with galva-

nised iron roofs, streets knee deep in dust, abundant public-houses, and a rough and ready population of 1,484 souls, made up of 1,310 Europeans and 146 Chinese. In spite of the severe droughts and other troubles it has had to contend with, Georgetown is a wealthy little place. In 1891, 17,061 tons of stone



APPROACHING A TOWNSHIP AT SUNDOWN

were crushed there, yielding 17,567 ounces of gold. The gold occurs in quartz veins, and is not unfrequently allied with mundic (pyrites).

Twenty-eight crushing mills find good employment, the value of whose machinery is estimated at no less than 166,200*l*.

We struck the township just at nightfall, and the lights glimmering in the windows and the sounds of revelry issuing from the different drinking places had a very homely air. 'The Only's' eyes began to twinkle, and he breathed hard in anticipation of the drunken orgie that lay before him. Evidently he knew his way about, for following his directions we found ourselves in what was no doubt intended to be the stable yard of a genuine township hotel. One or two impoverished horses stood forlornly about, and as we entered they looked askance at our animals, as much as to say, 'Where do you come from, and what do you want? If you think you are going to get any of our food you are very much mistaken.' Unshipping our packs we carried them into our rooms, leaving our horses to a shock-headed nigger styled by courtesy 'the groom.'

It was a long ramshackle wooden building this hotel, and just bristling with trade. Every room was crowded, and the bar was a perfect pandemonium. Those who had money spent it recklessly and ostentatiously; those who had not, obtained liquor on credit with as little noise as possible.

'The Only' was in his element, and inside of five minutes was the bosom friend of every man in the room. By midnight he was too drunk even to remember that he was a scion of the aristocracy. They are good wholesome drinkers in Georgetown, and he was just the man to take advantage of such an opportunity.

The talk was all of gold, gold, gold, nuggets,

crushings, new claims, etc., and from my own experience I am prepared to say that there was not a man in that room who, according to his own account, would not have made my fortune for a five-pound note. Sometimes they fought, but it was about some mining matter; sometimes they shed tears, but it was about some mining chance just missed; and when they laughed you might have staked your hat it was at something connected with their interminable employment.

A great deal of the country around Georgetown is under cultivation, nearly three hundred acres being market gardens. Maize seems in particular to thrive excellently, but when we were there an awful drought had set its finger on the land, and agriculture was for the time being played out.

After a stay of two days we had our horses run in, and, noting that the scarcity of grass and water had not much improved their condition, paid our bill, bade 'the Only' an impressive and alcoholic farewell, and passed out along the track to Croydon.

Four days later we were in the latter place offering our horses for sale, and when this was accomplished we placed ourselves and our baggage aboard the train, and set out for Normanton, ninety-three miles distant.

CHAPTER XI

*NORMANTON—HORSE DEALERS—WE PREPARE TO CROSS
THE CONTINENT TO ADELAIDE—‘MR. PICKWICK’*



NORMANTON is Normanton, and when you have said that you have said everything—it is like itself, and itself only.

In some ways it is charming, and in others diabolical; in justice, I am sorrowfully bound to admit that it most favours the latter. Situated on the Norman River, it is about fifty miles from the sea, and is built on low iron-stone ridges, the site being all that could be desired for a town.

When one considers that only a few years ago it was a simple frontier settlement, possessing none of the advantages of civilisation, while to-day it is a thriving place boasting a population of 1,251 souls, two weekly papers, a Supreme Court, a School of Art, a hospital, two or three banks, to say nothing of numerous churches and hotels, one is bound to admit that it deserves to succeed. The opening of the railway line to Croydon, however, was a bitter blow to it, for since then its glory has somewhat

waned. But we were constantly assured that it will soon pick up again.

As far as Customs revenues are concerned, Normanton stands fifth on the list of Queensland towns, having quite eclipsed its rival Burketown in the trade of the Gulf of Carpentaria. The inhabitants talk with confidence of its future, when it shall be connected with the Transcontinental railway, or by the line across the base of the Peninsula, with Cairns. That is one of the pleasing features of the Australian character—I mean the unanimity shown by every man in advancing the welfare of his own town. For every man naturally believes the particular place which he honours with his citizenship to be the best possible in the country, and the outcome of the jealousies thus engendered is the progress of the town itself. For this reason a Sydney man says to a Melbourneite, ‘Well, you have nothing like our harbour,’ to which the Melbourne man invariably replies, ‘Perhaps not, but have you anything to equal our tramcars?’

Stepping out of the train, we proceeded at once to our hotel, a commendable two-storied caravanserai off Main Street. This Main Street we found to be a roomy thoroughfare, possessing many good buildings, but with plenty of space for more. At intervals apoplectic cabs waddled through the dust, Bushmen rode slowly by, a few stray buggies pulled up before the stores, but the traffic was by no means overwhelming. Some years ago the Divisional Board attempted to plant trees in Main Street, but the

white ants destroyed every one of them. White ants are the curse of the district—they demolish everything, from Town Halls to consciences. I have seen whole buildings riddled by them till you could stick your finger through a two-inch plank without hurting yourself.

Our hotel was quite a palatial building, with elegant dining, billiard, and other apartments, clean wholesome bedrooms, and a neat smoking room. From the windows excellent views of the dried-up surrounding country could be obtained ; while, looking across the river, an uninterrupted view of mangrove swamp greeted the eye. The house was always full, and, as usual, the inmates were exceedingly interesting people, being for the most part squatters, bankers, merchants, and commercial travellers—all keen-eyed, eager men of business, and every one a sound judge of horseflesh and whisky.

As soon as we were installed, we set about our preparations. Our idea of attempting to cross to Adelaide, on the other side of the Continent, soon got known, and every other man we met had some advice on the subject to offer. One thing we noticed, and that was the fact that no one seemed to have any good opinion of the verdict of anyone else. One man said, ‘Don’t attempt it, dear boys ; if you’re not accustomed to the bush, you’ll never get through!’ Another, ‘Cross from here to Adelaide ? Of course, anybody could do it ; do it myself if I could spare the time!’ Somebody else, a little more careful than the last, said, ‘Look here, young men,

buy steady old horses, give 'em time, go slow, stick to the tracks as far as possible, don't attempt any larks, and you'll get through all right.' But among all there seemed to be no doubt that, owing to the drought, the country through which we would have to pass was in a direful state, and we should have to be prepared for a fairly hard struggle. We mentioned the word 'horses.' In a moment they were all unanimous; they *all* had horses for sale—horses up to any weight, every one of which could last longer on less food than any other, and horses that never strayed from camp and did not know what it was to knock up. They all brought proofs, or offered to produce men who could back up their assertions. What is more, they would have both witnesses and nags on hand where and whenever we might wish to see them.

Our importance became bewildering: whenever men glanced at us we knew it was on account of our desperate heroism. We were going to cross the Continent, and we were going to buy horses. True, we discovered later, it was more to the latter fact than to the former that we owed our notoriety. Men desirous of purchasing live stock when everyone else wanted to sell were uncommon, and deserved to be treated as such. Little we knew what lay before us on the morrow.

About 5.30 A.M. I was awakened from my slumbers by repeated rappings at my chamber door. On opening it I discovered the Boots with something on his mind. He was in a frenzy of excitement and

beckoned me along the passage and down the stairs into the yard. I was pyjama-clad, and the morning breeze blew cold. When I got down I looked about me, but could see nothing extraordinary, until my eye caught the last remains of a horse, standing dolefully against the slip-rails; a small boy was keeping him from falling down, and the hotel groom, as well he might, was gazing at both in speechless admiration. I say—affirming it to be true—that that horse was just the dismallest wreck of an extinct creation I have ever seen outside the walls of a museum. At first sight I thought he was dead, but the boy assured me he was only sleeping. With a feeble attempt at sarcasm I said, ‘It must be his last sleep, then!’ The boy, with a fine idea of humour, remarked that he thought so too. Then I asked why I had been called out of bed at this unseemly hour. The Boots looked and looked, scratched his head, and whistled a long low note expressive of intense astonishment. When he had recovered himself, he said slowly, ‘Damn my eyes, but you said you wanted to buy a horse and I reckoned I’d find you one if I busted for it. I’ve been up these three hours getting that brute!’ ‘My son,’ said I, ‘if you’re not careful, your reckless thoughtfulness for others will be the ruin of you. When I want you to assist me in the search for genuine antiques, I’ll acquaint you of the fact. In the meantime, go slow and keep your head cool!’ So saying, I returned to my chamber, but not before I had overheard that Boots remark to himself, ‘Doesn’t want to buy that ’orse; casts ’is heye over ’im an’

then don't want to 'ave 'im for his own. Well, I'll be ——.' The rest was inaudible.

My bed was very warm and comfortable, but I had not enjoyed it more than five minutes before a pebble struck my window. Leaping up and looking out I found a small crowd collected round the sorriest specimen of the equine race, if you except the one just described, I had ever beheld. This time it was a tall, thin, red-haired man who was in attendance.

'Good morning,' he began, on seeing me. 'You'll excuse me, but you're just the man I want. Now, I've got here the very identical horse to suit you. If you'll tell me where to put him I'll be round for your cheque after breakfast. No hurry!'

I said I agreed with him, there *was* no hurry, and, while thanking him for his consideration in calling so early, informed him that I would not take his horse even if he paid me to. I told him I could see that it would cost a king's ransom to fatten him within five miles of even looking at a saddle. Returning to my bed I was soon fast asleep.

How long I was permitted to slumber I cannot tell. But suddenly I was brought wide awake by feeling my shoulder shaken. A man was leaning over me. I clutched him by the throat, crying, 'What do you want here?' His reply was almost inarticulate, but I caught the words, 'Dark bay—black points—hands—bargain!'

Remonstrating with him gently, I threw him downstairs, only to discover a small black boy

crawling up the waterspout outside my window. Asking *his* business, he informed me that there were 'Two budgerree bosses longa yard!' Not knowing what a 'budgerree boss' might be, I donned a pair of trousers and went below to find out.

Now, I'm a sober-minded man I hope, and not given to undue exaggeration, but I assure you that that yard was just full of all the worst, oldest, most



RELICS

shame-faced, condemned relics of horses—barring the others previously mentioned—that ever had the audacity to look at a halter. As I appeared, the crowd set up a cheer, and a big man with a goatee beard approached me. He had an insinuating way with him, and he said, 'Don't be afraid. I've heard of you and I'll see you through. Why, the bargain's as good as made!'

I asked, 'What bargain?' He whistled gently

and said, 'Oh ! suffering Daniel ! What bargain ? Why, them hosses you're wanting just now. 'I've got ——'

'Stranger,' said I, impressively, 'I don't know your name and I don't want to, but that cast in your left optic tells me you're reclaimable. Think of your weeping mother and aged maiden aunt. Don't do it. Virtue is its own reward. Take a stranger's advice and cart those long-suffering, pre-historic animals back to their bone mill before their absence is discovered. I couldn't purchase one of them at any price. Really, I couldn't !'

Before he could frame a suitable reply I had left him. But there was to be no peace for me ; they were on the landings, down the passages, at the windows, in the dining-room, and on the verandah. Everyone had a horse to sell, and it's my belief if they hadn't been prevented, they'd even have brought them up stairs to my bedroom on approval. Outside, the road was like a saddling paddock ; the air resounded with such cries as 'sound as a bell,' 'good legs,' 'deep chest,' 'first-rate camp horse,' 'go like the wind,' &c. All of which eulogiums, I may say, were equally unjust to the reputations of the poor patient animals themselves, whose only ambition seemed to be to die and be at rest, in another and a better world, where horse-copers are unknown.

Now, the foregoing may be a little stretched : I don't deny it, but I assure you the worry was very great. However, in the end we were rewarded by obtaining four good useful nags, whose appearances

were the only things against them. Two (and they were the least valuable) were not so ill-looking, but the others, I must admit, *were* ugly. They were as thin as post-and-rail fences, in colour they were jet black where the mange hadn't touched them, and as they had long since parted company with the hair of their tails, they now possessed disgraceful banana-like stumps in their places, which did not lend any lustre to their beauty. Moreover they had each lost an eye. Otherwise, as our friend 'the only Smith' would have said, 'they were none so dusty.' We nick-



OUR EQUIPMENT

named them Cyclops and Polyphemus, which names, as time advanced, were shortened to Sikey and Polly. But in spite of their appearances, they

were first-rate horses, none better, and when we parted with them, nine months later, they had overcome a distance little short of 1,700 miles, and this under such disadvantages as but seldom fall to horses' lots.

Having decided upon our horses, our equipments had next to be considered. We had brought our saddles, bridles, and pack-saddles with us from

Croydon, so we had no need to purchase more. One sound piece of advice we accepted, and that was, not to burden ourselves with too much baggage. Flour, tea, sugar, salt, baking powder, pepper, and Worcester sauce, were the only edibles carried, while a couple of repeating rifles, a fowling piece, ammunition, two billy cans, two canvas water-bags, a quart pot, pannikins, tin plates, blankets, two large sheets of unbleached calico, hobbles and horse bells, with our own personal wardrobes, completed the outfit. Here let me say that there is nothing like unbleached calico for camping out; one sheet of it is equal to three blankets. We can never be sufficiently thankful to the man who advised us to take it. On many a bitterly cold night, with an icy blast blowing across the great plains, we had occasion to bless his name.



'MR. PICKWICK'

As we returned to the hotel after making our final purchases, we discovered a small cur following at our heels. Judging from his expression, he was not proud of himself, and certainly he had good reason not to be. His breeding was—well, to say the least of it, mixed. Bulldog and English terrier, with a touch of the Dachshund, Spitz, Pomeranian, and Italian greyhound, would come nearest the mark. In colour he was a dirty fawn, he was as thin as our horses, and

some kind friend had, in days gone by, poured vitriol over him, for there was an exact map of Asia burnt out of his coat. Altogether, he was as poor and utterly miserable a cur as can be imagined, and when he begged, with an awful expression of entreaty in his poor little face, to be taken compassion on, we let him follow in our footsteps, and decided if no one claimed him, which seemed unlikely, to take him with us. It was fate, for of course nobody *did* claim him, and from that very hour we began to weary of him; he was too servile even for a dog. We nicknamed him, then and there, Mr. Pickwick, for no other reason than that he was possessed of mildly sporting notions, as well as being of a contemplative and philosophical turn of mind.

Next morning, as soon as breakfast was over, we filled our packsaddles, paid our bill, and, with Mr. Pickwick at our heels, bade Normanton 'farewell.' It was a lovely morning. The horses were as fresh as it was possible for them to be, and we were naturally a little elated at the thought of what was before us. Mr. Pickwick didn't say much, because he hadn't much to say, but once he barked, and afterwards looked as depressed as was possible under the circumstances. Normanton lay behind us; Adelaide was ahead: without doubt our journey 'across the Continent' had commenced.

CHAPTER XII

*OUR FIRST CAMP—CATTLE STATIONS—SPEAR CREEK—
FLINDERS RIVER—CLONCURRY*



ACTING on reliable advice, we decided upon a track running parallel with the Norman River. It was a desolate route, monotonous in the extreme, the only vegetation being Quinine bushes (a tall slender tree, with a rough dark

bark and glossy leaves), Messmates (a medium-sized tree, with broad silvery grey leaves), the Polyalthia, the Leichardt, the Moreton Bay ash, and the Blood-

wood, the latter being one of the commonest scrub trees in Northern Queensland.

Not desiring to tire our horses at the outset, but rather to let them gradually accustom themselves to the stages we should be compelled to ask of them, our first day's distance was a short one, of only twelve miles.

After passing through a typical roadside township, built on a small clearing, and consisting of a couple of grog shanties, a butcher's and black-

smith's shop, we cried

a halt, turned loose,

and fixed up camp,

hobbling and bel-

ling our horses

carefully. With

considerable

pride we re-

flected that

twelve miles

of our long

journey was

accomplished,

and we pre-

pared to mark the distance on the chart. Gather our surprise when we discovered that the dot indicating our position hardly showed from the blotch which distinguished Normanton, while, on the other hand, ahead of us stretched nearly a yard of map. For the first time since our decision, a real impression of the distance we had undertaken to travel came before us.

Our camp was comfortable and, had it not been



FIRST CAMP

for the mosquitoes, would have been enjoyable. As it was, within an hour of sundown it was forcibly borne in upon us that we ought to have added cheesecloth nets to our equipments, for these pests nearly eat us alive. They were particularly hard on Mr. Pickwick, alighting on his map of Asia, and inducing him to keep up a continuous moaning all night long.

Next morning, to our dismay, we discovered that our horses were nowhere to be found. We searched all round the camp, listening intently for their bells, but without success. The Long'un, who had chosen the work of looking after the horses in preference to the cooking and tending camp, set off in search of them. When, some hours later, he returned, he brought the faithless beasts with him, and explained in figurative language that he had been obliged to walk no less than eight miles to recover them. He had found them making their way back to Normanton; they had no desire to cross continents: there was no ambition about those horses.

Saddling up, we proceeded on our way, the Long'un and I riding side by side, the two pack horses, Cyclops and Polyphemus, running loose ahead. In the cool of the morning it was pleasant travelling. The country improved as we progressed, the view being picturesquely made up of light scrub lands alternating with small untimbered plains, where mobs of kangaroo might occasionally be seen. Sometimes we chanced upon solitary travellers, equipped like ourselves, making for some of the large stations in the district, and now and again upon carrier's teams,

conveying stores to the same localities. But for the greater part of the distance we saw no one.

The bird life attracted our attention; such a variety of plumage we had seen nowhere before: painted or Gulf finches, little bigger than wrens, with breasts coloured into bands of every known hue; tiny zebras (not the animal), little brown fellows with red beaks and spotted breasts; galas, a species of grey cockatoo with beautiful pink breasts; emus, kites, plain turkeys (a kind of bustard), a few grey ibis on the water-holes, and the inevitable black crow.

Two nights later we camped at Vena Park Cattle Station, the property of a noted Queensland pioneer. The house, a typical frontier building constructed of slabs, stands on a sand ridge above a large and inviting lagoon. The hospitality was rough, but the welcome given us was most cordial and sincere. The property, an exceedingly large one, we found to be worked with black boys, under a white manager, and head stockman. These boys are great institutions. When young they make excellent station hands, being wonderful riders and splendid fellows with stock; but when they reach the age of fifteen or sixteen years it is, as a rule, hopeless to attempt anything further with them, for they become lazy and objectionable past all endurance.

Leaving Vena Park, we pushed on along the river towards Ifley Station, some thirty miles to the southward, the country opening out as we advanced to long rolling plains, sparsely wooded when timbered at all. Here and there we encountered dense masses

of pea bush, in some cases as many as seven feet high, growing thick as corn, but, though it was in appearance very inviting, our horses would not touch it, preferring the coarse bush grass, however scanty.

Reaching Ifley Station, we bade 'good-bye' to the Norman River, and struck down its offshoot, Spear Creek. Near this station is a big lagoon full of crocodiles, which, however, are said to be harmless. Lying in the muddy water with only their snouts protruding, they didn't look inviting, so we took the assertion for granted, without testing it. As I have said before, we are very trusting in such matters. We asked Mr. Pickwick—of whom, by the way, we were growing exceedingly tired—if he would care to experiment, but he declined. He was a dog without any soul for scientific research, and for this and several other reasons, we decided to give him away on the first opportunity.

Near Ifley Station a curious accident is recorded as happening a few years back. A bullock waggon, with dynamite on board, was crawling its weary way along the track, the driver, as was his usual custom, resting on his load. Something happened—nobody will ever know what: but it is sufficient that there was an explosion, and neither driver, bullocks, waggon, nor dynamite, have ever been seen or heard of since. It must have surprised that bullocky, if anything could surprise him!

Talking of bullock drivers, the driver himself is called the bullocky, while his mate or assistant is denominated the bullocky's offsider. Both are usually

the roughest of the rough, and both are professional masters of the art of abuse. I had the honour of the acquaintance of one bullocky who could swear—so it was said, and he himself was too modest to deny it—for *twenty-three minutes and eighteen seconds by the watch, without a break and without repeating himself*. Again, I once heard of a phonograph record of a bullocky straightening up his team; it lasted five minutes, and was found, on examination, to have blistered the copper cylinders. The experimenter said it was a good record, and I have reason to believe his audience agreed with him.

Leaving Ifley, the country becomes more open; rolling plain succeeds rolling plain, with hardly perceptible difference or anything to break the awful monotony of the view.

Spear Creek, like most of the Australian rivers and creeks, is merely a succession of waterholes in the summer season, and even these latter are often many weary miles apart. When we had run it some fifty miles, we crossed to the Saxby River at Taldora, and headed direct for Mount Fort Bowen, a point to the south-west. This mountain, if mountain it can be called, rises almost abruptly from a perfectly level plain, and owes its name to a fort built there in bygone days, to afford protection against the blacks. It is undoubtedly of volcanic origin, and presents an exceedingly picturesque appearance, being in pleasing contrast to the endless level of the surrounding country.

Next day we struck the famous Flinders River, of

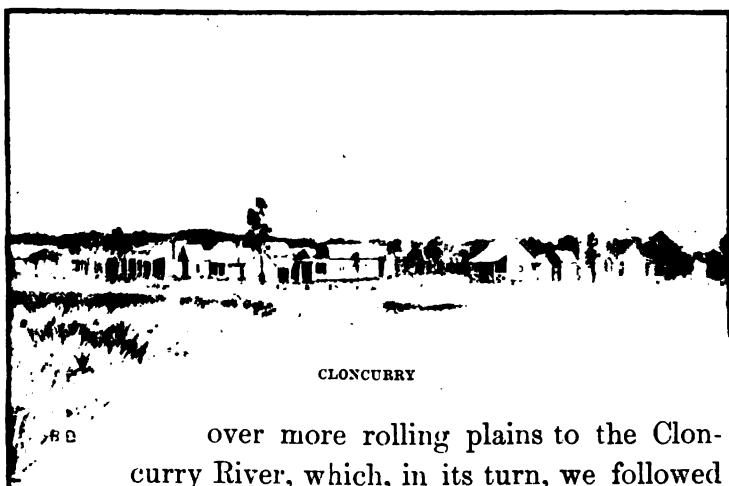
which we had heard so much. This river rises in the Great Dividing Range, and penetrates a vast extent of country before it flows into the Gulf of Carpentaria, a little to the west of Normanton.

Like most of the other rivers, it proved but a succession of waterholes separated by long patches of sand. But here a peculiarity of a great many Australian rivers manifested itself. Though to all appearance the river bed was perfectly dry, yet on digging, perhaps less than two feet beneath the surface, we found a running stream of crystal water, a little brackish, but still quite drinkable. This everlasting supply is a great boon to squatters, who, in times of drought, have only it to depend upon. And the mention of this river brings to my mind a touching little incident encountered during our ride along its banks.

At a spot overlooking a lovely stretch of water, and half hidden in undergrowth and high grass, we chanced upon what was unmistakably a grave—a little mound beneath a spreading Coolibar tree. Whose resting place it was we could not discover, but on searching about we found, roughly cut on the tree, this single word, 'Unknown.' Oh! the pathos of that word. Who shall over-estimate it? There, on that river bank in that desolate spot, where night winds sob and outlawed dingoes come to drink, is hidden away the finale of a life's history. What reflections it conjures up! Perhaps even to this day, in some peaceful English village, a grey-haired mother sits longing for news of her boy—always waiting, waiting, for the letter that will never come. He, poor fellow,

was probably found dead, and now lies taking his last rest far from kith and kin, in that lonely wilderness beneath the Southern Cross; his name unguessed at, and his only epitaph the single word 'Unknown'! There are thousands of such graves on the face of this great continent, and every one of them has its own unhappy secret, not to be revealed until the last great Judgment Day.

Bidding 'good-bye' to the Flinders, we headed



over more rolling plains to the Cloncurry River, which, in its turn, we followed down to the small mining township of the same name. And such a township we found it—such a burnt out place of desolation! Just a few rough buildings clustered together in the centre of an eye-aching plain, with less than nothing to commend it. Night was falling as we clattered through the dust of Ramsey Street and pulled up at our hotel. Here we intended to spell awhile. Having completed a ride of about two hundred and sixty miles since

leaving Normanton, we felt entitled to a brief rest before pushing east as far as Hughenden.

Our hotel was a long, low, rambling wooden structure, built on short piles, and boasting a galvanised iron roof, a long narrow passage, off which the bedrooms lay, two dining rooms, one for the gentlefolk (save the mark), the other for the masses, and an anthropological collection marvellous to behold. A dance was the order of the evening, and excitement ran high. We chose our rooms and went to change our apparel. An enjoyment we had been promising ourselves all through that hot disagreeable day was a cold bath ; judge our disappointment then, when we were informed that, owing to the scarcity of water in the township, baths had long since been put an end to. We argued, but in vain. Not a drop of bathing water could we obtain for love or money. We began to think that there must be something in those stories of the drought after all.

The dance was an enormous success. All the *élite* and otherwise of the township were there : Silver and Coppertails, as they are variously denominated. The large dining room was turned into a ball room, an accordion supplied the music, and at least twenty couples took the floor. As everyone knew and danced with everybody, introductions were not needed. The usual method of soliciting the honour of a dance was to approach the fair one and say 'Going to 'ave a go-in?' To which she would probably reply 'My colonial!' and there you were!

With great enthusiasm the ball was kept rolling

till nearly daylight, long after the accordion player was inebriated and the music had dropped to simple whistling. Between the dances drinks were called for, and not unfrequently two gentlemen, having claimed the same lady, would retire privately to decide the matter outside, leaving the fair one to obtain another or await the return of the victor, as she pleased. It was a proud moment for her, and she invariably took advantage of it.

The population of Cloncurry all told is 811, and



MOUNT LEVIATHAN, CLONCURRY

of the district about 1,200.

The place owes its origin partly to the large station properties in the neighbourhood, but more perhaps to its mineral wealth, which

is undoubtedly great. Last year 1,655 oz. of gold were procured, 1,276 oz. being alluvial, and the remaining 379 oz. extracted from 228 tons of quartz. Copper, however, is the principal metal obtained. Some few years ago one solid mass of virgin ore weighing nearly half a ton was discovered in one of the mines. It is principally, however, met with in combination with sulphur as copper pyrites, though sometimes it occurs as oxide and carbonate without sulphides. These

deposits rival, if not surpass in extent and richness, the celebrated Lake Superior mines in America. While the whole district is very prolific, the principal mines lie in a western and north-western direction. And it is very much to be regretted that, partly owing to the severe drought, partly to the condition of the copper market, and partly to the expense of transit,



MARATHON ARTESIAN BORE

the industry is at present at a complete standstill. It is, however, confidently expected that as soon as the railroad from Cloncurry to Normanton shall be completed, it will receive a fresh impetus.

After a stay of three days, during which time we saw everything that was to be seen, and heard everything that was to be heard, we remounted our trusty steeds, failed in our attempt to leave Mr. Pickwick

Q

behind us, and started along the well defined track towards Hughenden, about three hundred miles distant across the plains.

The stations hereabouts are wonderful concerns, covering areas of many hundreds of square miles, and capable of carrying from 100,000 to 350,000 sheep, in a good season. At the time of our visit, however, owing to the drought, they were having a bad time of it, and the squatters informed us they would have all their work cut out to make both ends meet. Passing Neelia Ponds Station we left the coach track, and struck off on a line of our own across the great downs, vast timberless plains, stretching away as far as the eye can reach. The day following we reached Maxwelton, and so on to Richmond Downs. This latter place is called after a station near at hand, and is a tiny township of only one street. Nevertheless it boasts a police station and a court house, with two or three of the usual style grog shanties, all to its own cheek.

Another short stage brought us to Marathon, with its charming head station, courteous manager, and wonderful artesian bore. Marathon carries 150,000 sheep, and shears by machinery (as, indeed, do most of these northern stations). Next day we fetched Telamon, and the night following were in Hughenden, having completed a ride of five hundred and sixty miles from Normanton, and roughly speaking, about nine hundred from Charters Towers.

CHAPTER XIII

HUGHENDEN—COACH JOURNEY

TANDING
on the
banks of
the Flind-
ers River,
Hughen-
den has a
decidedly

picturesque appearance. And in addition to its picturesque-ness it is a place of considerable importance, being the present terminus of the Northern Railway, to which comes all the produce of the great Pastoral West, and the depot from which those same pastoral regions derive their stores. Though a trifle larger than the general run of bush settlements, the town-

ship is of the usual pattern, made up of vacant allotments, dusty streets, houses of wood built on short thick piles and roofed with the inevitable galvanised iron, a hospital, a court house, a divisional board hall, a couple of tin tabernacles, a Chinese bakery, and a police station, with stores and hotels galore.

On arrival we rode up to our hotel, a long, low, one-storied building in the main street, and turned our weary horses loose in the stable yard. These township hotels are all very similar, the same peculiarities attach themselves to them all. The same long passage runs the whole length of the building, and off this the same stamp of bedrooms lie. The bath-room, when it is not used as a henroost, is always located in the spot most difficult to find, and every turning in the entire caravanserai, right or wrong, invariably brings one to the bar. Sometimes the servants are moderately civil, but as a rule they are exasperatingly independent. The owner himself is nobody, the person of most importance, next to the barmaid, being the Chinese cook. There's an amount of electro-plated dignity about those two officials which is simply freezing.

The arrangements are as good as can be expected in such places, and the prices are not more than usually diabolical. One objection (if we haven't objected to anything already) is that the walls of the bedrooms do not run up to the roof, for ceiling there is none, so that every word we say can be plainly overheard in the next apartment, except when the hotel is full, and then, just to vary matters, the

noise is so deafening that you can't hear yourself speak.

Having had enough of riding, we decided, if possible, to dispose of two of our horses in Hughenden, and to purchase in their stead some sort of a wheeled vehicle. We were confidently informed that we should be able to make just as good progress on wheels as in the saddle, be less bothered with horses, travel more comfortably, and at the same time carry more luggage and stores than heretofore. Accordingly, we straightway set about our search.

Owing to the scarcity of grass and water, horses were a drug in the market, and, as at Normanton, we found everybody anxious to sell, nobody to buy. However fortune was not going to desert us in this scurvy fashion, for during the evening an old man put in an appearance with the information that in a few days he would have a buckboard buggy to sell 'at a fair figure.' We said 'a fair figure' sounded reasonable enough, but we would wait and see the conveyance before we committed ourselves.

On the face of it (of circumstances I mean, not the buggy) it was impossible, at the ruinous price of bush hotels, for both of us to remain. So on the remembrance of an invitation from a hospitable squatter in the neighbourhood, given us while in Townsville, I decided to go on by coach to his station, leaving the Long'un to follow with the buggy, if it should equal our expectations.

By the time these arrangements were concluded,

we had made a considerable number of friends, and the night before I left they all attended to bid me 'good-bye.' Gratitude is one of my strong points, and I shall not forget *that* 'good-bye' if I live to be a hundred. Who they really were, or where they came from, neither of us had any idea. They trooped in, one after another, like imps in a pantomime. They were the most friendly set of ruffians I ever experienced, and every man jack of them had come with the invincible determination of drinking to our good fortunes as long as the drink and the money, or the credit, held out. I may possibly be wrong, but I think (I only say *I think*) that they acted up to their intentions.

During the evening, a thin, gentlemanly-looking young fellow lounged into the bar, and commenced a disjointed conversation with the goddess of the place. Something about his appearance fascinated me, and instinctively I felt I was in the presence of somebody really great. Pointing him out to a bystander, I asked who he was? 'Lor' bless you!' was the reply, 'don't you know who 'e is? Why! that's 'im who drives the Winton coach, and a son of a gun of a fine driver, too, my colonial! Takes you out to-morrow morning!' There! I felt he must be a great man.

Towards midnight, with protestations of eternal friendship, our meeting broke up. All who were able to, went home; the rest remained where they were till morning. One man in particular who had regarded me with peculiar favour all the evening, repeatedly avowed his intention of never leaving me.

I was just the sort of bloomin' candidate for his money ; no dogrotted woman suffrage about me, and I should have his vote if he busted for it. Then calling heaven and earth to witness his unconquerable determination, he placidly laid himself down on the side walk and fell into a sweet sleep.

My coach was to leave at 4.30 A.M., and, as it was then considerably after midnight, I determined to turn in and obtain a few hours' rest. But though I turned in, repose was not permitted me. My right-hand neighbour was a gentleman who *snored*, if such an inadequate word can express it. I had never heard anything like it before, and certainly I haven't since. Starting in a faint wheezy whisper, it gradually grew and grew in volume, until it reached the exact imitation of an empty iron water-cart rumbling over a cobbled pavement. No other description would give you any idea of it. It was the most soul-distracting noise imaginable ; it split the match-board partition and contracted the iron roofing—almost. Everybody in the neighbourhood was aware of it, and had something different to say on the subject. I heard them distinctly, and awaited the *dénoûment*. Presently I caught footsteps stumbling along the passage, then the handle of the snorer's door was turned, and somebody entered his room. As I have said, the walls did not reach up to the roof, consequently all the proceedings could be plainly overheard by the occupants of the adjoining rooms. The interest was intense. We detested the delay ; but we felt the avenger was fumbling for the snorer's bed. Presently he found it.

His voice sounded very ghostly in the stillness between the snores.

‘Here, I say, you mister! Wake up.’

‘Eh! wha—what’s the matter? It ain’t time to get up yet!’

‘Time be ——! Say! Now look here, do you think you’ve got any right to snore this bloomin’ old ‘ouse down?’

‘Who’s snoring the house down?’

‘You are!’

‘That be blowed for a yarn! What a yer givin’ us? Snore? Why, I haven’t slept a wink the whole of this blessed night.’

‘Don’t you—that’s all. You just raise as much as ‘alf another snore, and I’ll raise you out of this ‘ere shanty in a pig’s whisper! You take it from me!’

‘Oh, take a fit!’ etc. etc.

The visitor left, but in less than two minutes the concert had recommenced, and from my little bed I wondered who’d be the next to take the matter up. As before, the noise gradually grew in volume, shook the partitions, and rolled in sullen thunder down the passages. Then a female voice, somewhere in the darkness, said—

‘Jim!’

‘Hullo!’

‘Jim! there’s somebody snoring so’s I can’t sleep!’

‘Hang ‘im, ‘e’s kept me awake these three hours. I reckon I’ll go and have a talk to ‘im!’

Once more ghostly footsteps stole down the corridor, and once more I heard the fumbling for the snorer's bed.

‘Here. Wake up!’

‘Oh! go to glory! Who ’re you a comin’ round, and a worryin’ of folks at this time o’ night?’

‘Who ’m I? Well, I’ll learn you who I am, blamed quick. I’m a shearer from the Billabong as never called for tar. Who are you to keep a whole bloomin’ hotel awake, cussin’ you for snorin’ and a roarin’ like a helephant with the ’eaves?’

There was a sharp crack, resembling the sound of a fist striking a hard cheekbone, and, in half a second, a rough-and-tumble struggle on the floor. Then we knew that everyone was awake, for from all sides came signs of encouragement and advice. When, five minutes later, a husky voice said, ‘There! I reckon that ’ll learn you not to snore!’ the enthusiasm was unbounded, and every man was wanting someone else to come and drink with him, *at somebody else’s expense of course*. I forget what happened after that, for within ten minutes I was asleep. When I woke, it was to find a lantern glaring in my face, and a voice saying, ‘Four o’clock, and an awful cold morning. Hurry up; coach starts in half an hour.’

After dressing myself by candlelight, I got my things together, swallowed a hasty breakfast, and went out into the bitterly cold street. A forlorn young moon was just sinking behind the opposite housetops, and her feeble light showed me a

bulky substance standing in the road. This, on closer inspection, I found to be the coach. Cobb's conveyances are too well known to need much description. Suffice it that they are heavy lumbering constructions riding on leather springs, with bodies somewhat after the fashion of the ordinary English coach. The box holds three passengers, the inside generally four; the luggage is piled on the roof and on a tray behind. Five horses are driven, and as likely as not, three of the number have never been in harness before.

As I arrived upon the scene, the driver put in an appearance, and while leisurely scanning the load, made reference to some horses we should obtain at the first change. I was cheered to hear that they were 'real warrigals,' or in other words four kickers and a bolter, and altogether unqualified and unmanageable brutes. 'Well!' said our driver complacently, 'it won't matter. I don't reckon we've any passengers booked as 'll spoil!' It was not a complimentary remark, and I was preparing myself to argue it with him, when the warning cry of 'all aboard' sounded.

As I had not been fortunate enough to secure a box seat, I was compelled to ride inside. An enormous amount of luggage was booked, and for this reason we were much cramped for room. The front seat inside was usurped by portmanteaux, boxes, etc.; in consequence, three of us (a big, buxom bushwoman, going out as cook to a Winton hotel, a little Irish emigrant girl, lately arrived, and quite unac-

quainted with the customs of the country, and myself) had to find seating accommodation on one narrow seat. For this reason, and because I am bashful in company, for ninety-eight horrible miles I was compelled to ride with my legs dangling out of the window. They are good legs, but they were never meant to dangle. They became cramped and stiff beyond bearing, and before half the journey was done, they might have been anyone else's for all I should have known the difference.

The driver called out 'all right!' the ostlers let go the horses' heads, there was a second or two of wild plunging, then round



COACH AND FIVE ON THE GREAT TREELESS PLAINS

went the wheels, and we were dashing out of the township into the Unknown, at a pace that looked unpleasantly like running away. As soon as we were comfortably started I began to look about me. It was bitterly cold and dreary, so, to warm myself, I produced a pocket pistol loaded with some of the genuine stuff. In an excess of gallantry I offered my companions a nip. The girl declined, but my buxom friend

embraced the opportunity with such alacrity that, I regret to say, on its return, the flask contained barely a small thimbleful. Such is the variable nature of man that I began immediately to regret my ill-advised generosity. Under its soothing influence, however, the good lady became communicative. She said, 'Young man! I had a daughter once,' and when I had avowed my interest, she continued, 'as fine a young heifer as ever made eyes at a policeman, an' I give that girl a tip-top eddycation—I did!'

'I don't doubt it!' was my reply, and as soon as I had said it, I saw that it was an unfortunate remark. She became quarrelsome in a second.

'And phwat might ye mean by that?' she asked. 'Let me be afther giving ye a bit of advice, young man. Don't you be taking me for one of your flighty pieces; d'ye mind me now!'

I protested my entire innocence of any such intention, whereupon she desired that the coach might be immediately stopped, remarking that, if I were a man, I'd 'put me props up,' when, though she was a poor, *lonely, unprotected* female in a public conveyance, she'd teach me who was who! And so, for the rest of that pitiless journey, that aggressive female continued to blackguard me unceasingly; mile after mile she talked *to* me and *at* me, and whenever we stopped to change horses I was immediately invited to step down and engage her in combat on the spot. The driver and other passengers laughed; but in my humble opinion—and surely I ought to know something about it—it was a most unpleasant experience.

By the time the sun rose we were well out on the plains, long eye-aching tracts of desolation, with scarcely a tree or a shrub to break the terrible sameness of the view. Our first change of horses occurred at Afton Downs Head Station, where we picked up the 'awful warrigals' before mentioned. They afforded us considerable entertainment. Two of them opened the ball by throwing themselves down and mixing up the harness beyond all recognition. When they



QUEENSLAND MOUNTED RIFLES

were put to again, they and their companions bolted with us out of the yard, carrying away the gatepost *en route*; after which they settled down to a break-neck go-as-you-please along the rough, uneven path, allowing us to feel that, unless they turned the coach over in the deep ruts of the track, or dragged us over the edge of some ravine, the danger might be said to be over. All this time the driver was smiling and conversing with the box passengers as calmly as if he

were at his own tea table. I've seen a good deal of first class driving here and there, but never anything to equal what I saw that morning. It was superb, and even my lady friend forgot to miscall me in her enthusiasm.

As we progressed, the view became more and more monotonous ; mile succeeded mile of grass laden plain, the tufted herbage showing a pale yellow colour in the glaring sunlight. The sense of illimitable space was most depressing, and, I said to myself, 'Woe betide the unfortunate man who should lose himself hereon.' The following clipping from a district paper will give some idea of what he may expect.

Our Hughenden correspondent writes as follows :—Whilst the Southern part of the colony is being devastated by floods, and lives are being lost thereby, a death from thirst has taken place here. The following is one of the most pitiful and horrible stories the writer has ever heard. On Sunday morning a cook named James Donald, together with his wife and child, sixteen months old, and accompanied by Charlie De Silva, the coloured 'ice cream' man, left Hughenden for Rockwood. The men had 'Charlie's' handcart as a baggage waggon. As is usual with the inexperienced bushman, only a small supply of water was taken, and this was exhausted by the time they had travelled seven miles. The men left the woman and child and went in search of water ; this was early in the afternoon. The woman and child were alone the whole night, and during that time a horseman passed and gave all the water he had to them, also stating that by striking and following a fence he indicated, a dam would be found. In the morning, as the men had not returned and the child craved for a drink and her breasts were dry, Mrs. Donald went in search of them, and met them about 9 A.M. without water. She directed them to the fence spoken of by the horseman and patiently awaited their return. Hours passed

and no relief came, and she, poor creature, driven frantic by the piteous cries of the child for a drink, was at a loss how to act. At last, able to bear it no longer, she decided to leave the child and try and obtain relief. She took her stockings and tied the baby to a tree and started. She was met by a man named Gerraghty, who took her to Stevenson's camp, got her water, and put her on the coach for Hughenden in the evening. Instead of going for the child, Gerraghty went to town—twelve miles—to report the matter and get a fresh horse, during which time the child died. Sergeant MacNamara at once despatched two constables and a tracker, and followed himself with Mr. Warneminde in a buggy, taking the woman with him. The poor mother easily found the spot, but what a sight! The child was dead. He had broken from the tree in his dying agonies, and his head was bruised and cut, and worse still the body was being devoured by bulldog ants, who swarmed over the rescuers, fighting for their prey. His skin was baked with the sun, and the very thought of the death the poor babe suffered is horrifying. Mrs. Donald, now fairly mad, was then brought into the hospital. The men were still missing, but at noon on Tuesday the tracker found them separated, and in a sinking condition; a few hours more, and they would have perished. They were taken to the twelve mile hut, and a buggy was sent out, and all are now in the hospital doing as well as can be expected. The above is a horrible tale of suffering. Many will blame the mother for leaving the child, but let those who do place themselves in a like position. Weakened by twenty-four hours without water, a big child, unable to walk and too heavy to carry, crying piteously for water, what could she do but try and get help for her suffering infant? Surprise is felt at the action of the two men. Fancy a man meeting an unprotected woman and child craving for drink, and being told her husband and mate were as badly off and searching for water, calmly wetting the woman's lips and proceeding on his way. He should make his mark in the world. If Mr. Gerraghty had gone at once to the child it might have been saved.

Now and again we sighted a few kangaroo, emu, and wild turkey, but as a rule not a sign of life met the eye. The only things which lent variety to the view were the mirages; lovely lakes, in whose glistening surfaces were reflected trees and distant mountain



A FOOT TRAVELLER

peaks, with wonderful distinctness. These constantly appeared before us, only to fade away as we approached.

Sometimes we passed small parties of travellers (bushmen) either walking or jogging quietly along on horseback. I noticed that in the latter case almost everyone was well mounted, and led a pack horse, presumably his own property. These men form a class of their own, and many of

them, I am sorry to say, belong to that low, miserable, thieving fraternity, who, from year's end to year's end travel the country, ostensibly looking for work, but inwardly praying, for all that they are worth, that they may not find it. Their impudence

exceeds belief, and such is the charity of the squatters, that it is possible for them to pass over the entire country from one end to the other, living on the fat of the land, and never called upon to do a stroke of work for their own support. Their motto is a strange one ; it is to the effect that 'stealing is not stealing when you want what you take,' and the sad part of it is that, as they always do *want*, there is only one side to it—their own. When they can't thieve from the squatter they practise on each other. One station owner alone informed us that it cost him nearly two hundred pounds a year to feed these lazy animals. Upon our asking why he did it, he said that if he denied them rations (flour, tea and sugar), they would, in all probability, embrace the first opportunity of revenging themselves with a box of matches on his paddocks, and it is better, he continued, to feed them than to lose thousands of sheep for want of grass. It was from this undesirable class that the men came who mainly originated the great bush strike a year or two back, when gangs of armed men prowled the colony, burning, maiming, and intimidating, at their own sweet will. That reign of terror will not soon be forgotten in Queensland.

CHAPTER XIV

*THE GREAT PLAINS—A MAIL CHANGE—THE KILLARNEY
HOTEL—SESBANIA—OONDOOROO—WINTON—WESTLANDS
—BOUNDARY-RIDER'S TENT—BIMERAH*



OWARDS mid-day, half our journey done, we stopped to change horses at a small hut built of sacking quite by itself and kerosene tins, and standing self in what seemed the centre of this interminable plain. Here we obtained lunch—roast turkey, damper, and tea, all as wretched as the hovel in which it was served. The individual who kept the place, and who was dignified by the title of groom, had been in the employ of the Coaching Company for four years; during the whole of that time he had seen no town, large or small, or had had any intercourse whatsoever with any people other than the coach passengers and the few wayfarers who chanced to pass his door. His sole occupation was to look after the

company's horses, and to have a team ready for the up and down mail every week. In the intervals, he watched the mirages and talked to the wild turkeys on the plain.

As soon as the meal was eaten we started again, and rolled along in the same monotonous fashion until evening. The afternoon seemed as if it would never come to an end, but at length night fell, stars began to twinkle, and the evening wind sighed drearily through the long grass. Within the coach, the approach of night was even more desolate than the glare of day. We had exhausted our topics of conversation and abuse, so there was nothing for it but to stare at the dwindling landscape in silence. Away to the left, beside a creek bend, a camp fire burned brightly ; beyond that nothing but the evening star cheered the dull expanse of plain. At nine o'clock, sick to death of travelling, we pulled up for the night at a miserable three-roomed grog shanty, dignified by the name of the Killarney Hotel. Here I had understood a buggy from Sesbania Station would await me ; but as none had arrived I foresaw that I should be compelled to pass the night where I was. For several reasons this was unfortunate.

Thinking I should require but little money, and being anxious to leave the Long'un as much as possible for the purchase of the buggy, I had only brought a few shillings with me. My lunch had cost me half-a-crown, and my bed would swamp another ; as practically they were gone, I had no more, and I wanted supper badly. But you can't sleep, sup, and

then decline to pay. So, in spite of my ravenous hunger (for a coach ride across Queensland plains produces an appetite if it does nothing else) I was compelled to go without. Feigning to be unwell, I retired to bed, whence I listened to the clattering of plates, and sniffed the appetising smells percolating from the adjoining room, in a perfect agony of hunger. Surely, I thought, meat had never smelt so nice before. By the time the meal was over I could have eaten my boots, but I consoled myself with the reflection that I should certainly be at the Station by breakfast time, and then I would make ample amends for my present discomfort.

Next morning at daylight, the coach went on its way without me. Breakfast time arrived and still no buggy hove in sight. Oh! with what agony I watched the treeless horizon of that plain for a vehicle. The landlady stepped out and informed me that breakfast was on the table. Bless her heart, I knew it was, better than she. Once again I was compelled to feign indisposition. The situation was becoming critical; I had taken in the last hole of my waist strap, and what else to do to alleviate my hunger I knew not. I was too proud to confess that I had no money. Perhaps it was just as well they kept no poultry, for assuredly, if they had, I should have lured an old rooster behind the hay-stack and eaten him alive. Suddenly a brilliant idea flashed across my brain. I remembered that in my bag I had half a bottle of Eno's Fruit Salts. The thought was heaven; I rushed in, seized the bottle

and took a strong dose. The gas was as good as a meal, and for a time the cravings of hunger were, to a certain extent, alleviated. But it was small use, for half an hour later I was hungrier than ever.

So the miserable morning wore on. Lunch time found me still gazing across that burnt up plain for the buggy that never appeared. But if a vehicle did not come, the midday meal did, and again the same dismal farce had to be enacted. Once more I took a dose of Eno's Fruit Salts, and once more I found temporary relief. Then, just as I was on the point of going to the landlady and confessing everything, the buggy rattled up to the door and I was saved. But it was touch and go; there was only one more dose left, and what would have happened then, I dare not contemplate. Two hours later I was seated in a cool dining room shaded by a creeper-covered verandah, making such a meal as surely mortal man never saw before. Cold mutton, pickles, salad, home-made bread, cheese, and English beer. Ye gods! it was a luncheon fit to set before a king!

Space will not allow me to recount all the pleasures of my stay at hospitable Sesbania, but the routine of one day may well be taken as typical of the rest. The house itself is a long low building with a broad verandah running all round it; the rooms, dining-room, bedrooms, and office, open on to this, and the verandah again on to the garden and tennis lawn. A hundred yards behind the house are the men's kitchens and quarters, with the

machinery sheds, and store. To the right of the quarters stands the stock yard, and beyond that, and on all sides, stretches the interminable plain.

The breakfast bell rings at six o'clock every morning, with the exception of Sunday, which is a lazy day. As soon as the meal is finished a general move is made to the stock yard, where the day's supply of horses are in waiting. Every man secures his own animal and departs to his work, returning, unless detained, about half-past four in the afternoon. Then an hour's sharp tennis (for these Queenslanders are never tired) prepares the body for the evening bath, or *bogie* as it is usually called, after which comes dinner.

When the evening meal is eaten, lounge chairs are dragged on to the tennis court, pipes are soon in full blast, conversation ensues, and bedtime occurs about ten o'clock. It is a hospitable station owned by hospitable men.

Sesbania covers an area of 1,550 square miles, carries 195,000 sheep, 175 cattle, and 250 horses. It is principally clothed with Mitchell, Blue, and Flinders grass; the soil is clay, and the timber mainly Coolibar in the creeks and Whitewood on the ridges. The breed of sheep is Merino, that of the cattle Durham; and the amount of wool sent off from the Station yearly averages 450 tons *greasy*.

According to statements made to me, and for the truth of the majority of which I can vouch with a clear conscience, the principal drawbacks to life in these parts are droughts, bush fires, strikes, travellers,

want of useful timber, and plagues of caterpillars, rats, locusts, and cats.

Regarding the four last a curious story is told. I am not going to say whether I believe it or not. You must form your own ideas about that. I simply give the story as it was told to me.

Not very long ago, after an exceptionally hard season, heavy rain fell, and grass began to grow where, formerly, grass there was none. Hardly had it made its appearance above ground, before a plague of caterpillars overran the country (when I say a plague I do not mean that they came by ones or twos, but by millions, covering the whole face of the earth); and when they had departed into the mysterious north-west, not a vestige of green remained. More rain fell, and again the plucky grass shot up. It was not more than just visible when a plague of locusts came, and eat it down again. Finally, the locusts disappeared into the north-west, just as the caterpillars had done before them. The squatter, marvelling, looked on and wondered if his troubles were going to end here.

Once more rain fell, and once more the grass sprang up. This time it was permitted to attain a decent height. But things were not to go smoothly after all. One morning a boundary rider killed a sneaking grey rat near his hut, and before evening he had killed half a dozen. Within two days they were to be seen all over the plains in millions, devouring the roots of the grass as if they had been starved for weeks. It was a case of—

Great rats, small rats, lean rats, brawny rats,
Brown rats, black rats, grey rats, tawny rats,
Grave old plodders, gay young friskers,
Fathers, mothers, uncles, cousins,
Cocking tails and pricking whiskers,
Families by tens and dozens.

They infested the head station, they overran the house and store, they eat the saddles and harness, they played on the tables, devoured books, clothes, and boots with equal impartiality, and finally disappeared into the north-west as mysteriously as they arrived.

Now comes the marvellous part of the story. Hardly were they gone *before cats put in an appearance*; tortoiseshells, tabbies, blacks, browns, and greys; everyone twice as big as decent respectable mousers ought to be, and everyone bent on catching up those rats. They stayed about a week, then into the north-west they too vanished, leaving the squatter amazed and frightened, as to what might next appear. When I heard this story, I thought to myself the plagues of Egypt would have to be original to command attention in Western Queensland. But to return to my log-book.

After a few days, the Long'un put in an appearance with our purchase, the most wretched old scarecrow of a buggy mortal man ever saw. Our worthy friends Cyclops and Polyphemus were in the traces, and the venerable Mr. Pickwick, more cringingly apologetic than ever, was in attendance on the luggage at the back. Looking at the whole concern I was irresistibly reminded of Rudyard

Kipling's 'Ballad of the Bolivar,' whereupon we christened her 'The Bolivar!' at once. She was such a wreck that we 'felt her hog and felt her sag, betted when she'd break,' every time she moved.

After a day or two's tinkering up, and constant anxiety about the dishing of her wheels, we said good-bye to our kind friends the Messrs. Bostock, and struck south-east across the plains for Manuka and Oondooroo. The latter is a wonderful property, and quite the show place of the district. Here some 250,000 sheep are yearly shorn by machinery (Wolseley patent), while, most astonishing of all, telephones, with the idea of centralising bush fires, and thus saving both horseflesh and men's time, have been erected all over the run. At certain seasons of the year, bush

fires started by travellers or by natural combustion are very prevalent. If one hasn't to work at them or to lose by them, they are gorgeous sights, sometimes extending as much as thirty miles, with flames, in a good grass season, rising into



SHEEP SHEARING BY MACHINERY

the air to the height of sixty feet. They carry everything before them, and woe betide the unfortunate carrier, drover, or traveller who may happen to be in the front of one.

These carriers are queer folk, and the outcome of a queerer civilisation. Their business in life is to convey stores, etc., by means of bullock or horse waggons, between the civilised east and the stations in the far west. As a rule they are brought up to the work from earliest childhood, know no home save their enormous waggons, and no companions save



BULLOCK WAGGON AND TEAM

their teams, from the day of their birth to the day of their death. When a carrier takes to himself a spouse, she invariably accompanies him on his wanderings, and when the children are born, they are trained and brought up to it in like manner.

Let me picture to you a Queensland carrier, his enormous waggon filled with station stores or wool and drawn by perhaps twenty stalwart bullocks, creeping across these treeless plains. The carrier himself rides on a pony beside the team, his wife and children being snugly perched on the summit of the load. In a coop under the waggon are the family

poultry, a cattle dog runs beside it, and a flock of goats, following in the wake, completes the party. As soon as they halt for the night the bullocks are outspanned, the wife fixes up camp, the poultry are released, and the goats come bleating up to be milked. So day in, day out; year in, year out; from waterhole to waterhole, these lonely folk travel the country, careless of the outside world, their only roof the heavens, and their only interest the price of loading, their families, and their teams.

Talking of carriers and telephones reminds me of an amusing incident which occurred during our stay at Oondooroo.

The wool shed, where carriers waiting for loading usually camp, is situated seven miles from the head station, but is connected with it by telephone to the manager's office. On one occasion a carrier made his appearance at the caretaker's quarters, and requested with great fertility of language to be told why he was not permitted to depasture his bullocks in the usual paddocks. Before he entered the room the caretaker had been holding converse with the squatter through the telephone, and only turned from it to ascertain the bullocky's business. Having received his answer, that gentleman stated his intention of wiping the dirt with that squatter, of banging him up and down creation till his own mother wouldn't know him; then mounting his horse, he set off for the head station to argue matters there, never dreaming that the squatter had overheard the whole conversation through the instrument.

The carrier met no one on the way, and as he had never seen or heard of either a telegraph or a telephone, his surprise may be imagined when he was met at the office door by the owner, with the remark, 'So you're the man who's going to wipe the dirt with me, to bang me up and down creation till my own mother wouldn't know me, eh? Well, what d'you want?' There never was anybody so dumb-founded as that bullocky; he couldn't understand it at all. When he found out how he'd been tricked, it is said he went out and hired two men and a boy to kick him.

Oondooroo is owned by Messrs. Ramsay Brothers & Hodgson, and covers an area of 663,680 acres. As I have said already, it carries about 250,000 sheep, also 150 cattle, and 540 well bred horses. The grasses and timbers are similar to those of Sesbania. The owners are splendid fellows—better it would be impossible to find—and hospitable to the last degree.

And really, the hospitality shown by owners of stations to passing travellers is little short of marvellous. Hardly a night passes without some stranger being the station's guest. No questions are asked, he simply rides or drives up to the door, says his name is—we'll say Brown, and that he comes from Hughenden and is going to Winton. If he looks anything like a gentleman he is immediately told to turn his horses loose into the paddock, and is invited into the house himself. Otherwise he goes to the men's hut, where the living is perhaps rougher, but the welcome is just the same. Next day he

passes on his way again, unless he prefers to spell a day or two, in which case he is cordially invited to remain and make himself at home for as long as he pleases. It is a wonderful state of things, and is less often abused than would generally be supposed.

Leaving Oondooroo, we skirted the base of the hills of the same name, and reached Winton, or, as



PACKING BULLOCK WAGGON.

it is often called, the City of the Plains. This is as curious a little township as will be found in the length and breadth of Australia. Situated on the Western River—a tributary of the Diamantina, it is a hundred and forty three miles from Hughenden, and about four hundred, as the crow flies, from the sea coast. As one approaches it, it has the appearance of a forlorn little collection of galvanised iron

and wooden buildings, standing all alone out on the dreary plains. But in spite of its humble outward appearance, its people are not behind the times. They are believers in Winton at any rate.

When we arrived, a race meeting was in progress. Now if there is one sport more than another of which Queensland people—and I may say Australians generally—are fond, it is horse racing. Every man in Western Queensland who can scrape enough money together, owns a race horse, and those who can't afford the luxury, endeavour to spoil the games of those who can. I don't mean to infer, for a moment, that the majority are dishonest—far from it. But the racing code is lax, and over and over again, we met men who made it their sole business, from year's end to year's end, to tramp the bush with a likely animal, practically living on what he earned them, either by winning, or what is technically termed, 'running stiff.' These men are called Forties, otherwise Spielers or Blacklegs.

When a township race meeting occurs, almost every station in the vicinity sends a horse or two to compete, with a contingent of enthusiastic backers, and party feeling runs high.

On this particular occasion it was a roasting day, something like a hundred and ten in the shade, and as a result the booth keepers were doing a roaring trade. Nine out of every ten men would have been ashamed to have left the course sober. 'There's such a thing as honour,' they would have said; but for all that, the racing was excellent, and a better day's sport could not have been desired.

Winton is one of the youngest of the far western towns. Fifteen years ago it consisted of a single house, a grog shanty, built half of rough-hewn timber and half of calico, where fiery rum was dispensed to the traveller out of a tin pannikin at the moderate charge of one shilling per drink. It was a place where the face of a white woman was never seen, and the remembrance of one almost forgotten ; where the thought of a policeman was only a hideous nightmare, and the name of a magistrate but an excuse for blasphemy, and more rum to drink to his destruction. Fighting, cursing, and drinking, were the order of the day, and the next hotel, save the mark, was a hundred and fifty miles to the eastward, with none to the west. At that time all the country, for hundreds of miles round, was being rushed by stockmen, anxious to secure as much land as their stock and the laws would allow them. It was indeed a golden age for publicans.

Now all is changed. Winton with its 625 inhabitants is a peaceful and orderly town, with broad streets, half a dozen hotels, pretty bright-eyed barmaids, drinks only sixpence, and real glass tumblers to drink them out of, a newspaper, church, school, divisional board hall, court house, racing and tennis clubs, and last, but by no means least, two banks, presided over by young gentlemen who lead the fashions and treat the other inhabitants with that haughty condescension peculiar to the Australian bank official. The good old times would certainly seem to have disappeared.

Winton has only a small history, no ruins, and but few traditions, but it has one character, a portly store-keeper, who never fails to button-hole the newly arrived traveller, while in a hoarse whisper he repeats the cabalistic words, 'When did you come in? When are you going out? And did you see any teams [carriers] on the road?'

From Winton we struck out for Boulia, a still smaller township two hundred and forty miles further west. It was another dreary journey and in other ways a most unpleasant one, for although along the track grass was plentiful enough, water was terribly scarce, and it became a matter of grave doubt whether we should ever reach our destination, much less push on to the South Australian border as we hoped to do. But after a fortnight's constant travelling (for owing to the state of the country and the condition of our horses we were unable to do more than average fifteen miles a day), we reached it, only to find it what it had been described to us as, the most God-forsaken dried-up hole in all Australia.

Boulia is a hot place! The inhabitants can't gain-say that, and indeed they don't try to; for it is their favourite boast that the tropic of Capricorn runs down their main street. But this, like most of their assertions, is not founded on fact, though it is quite near enough to be first cousin to the truth. For its existence, Boulia depends solely on the great pastoral properties which surround it, some of which exceed 3,000 square miles in extent. Her population is a

hundred and one, and it would break the heart of the whole district if that *one* were to die.

Immediately on arrival, we instituted inquiries as to the likelihood of our being able to get on to the border, but the reports were of the most dismal nature possible. Stations were being abandoned in all directions, stock were travelling in search of food and water, and there was nothing but death and starvation to be met with on all sides. Everyone united in advising us to turn back, and so we were reluctantly compelled to retrace our steps. It was a bitter disappointment!

Beyond the knowledge of having failed in what we started to carry out, it was dreary work returning over the same ground, and a journey of sad sights as well, for an Australian drought is a horror that must be experienced to be appreciated. I should perhaps not be beyond the mark in describing every mile of the journey as a graveyard of dead stock, cattle, horses, and sheep. The carrier's business was practically suspended, and in consequence the tracks were almost deserted.

Sixteen days later we reached Winton, only again to leave it behind us, this time to pass east *via* hospitable Vindex, to Maneroo Creek, thence on to the Thompson River. About here the aspect of the country changes; the treeless plains of which we had grown so tired give place to scrubby ridges, and Mulga begins to thrust itself upon the notice. A curious tree this Mulga (*Acacia doratoxylon*), being of medium height, of a grey hue, with

angular branchlets, linear leaves, these latter slightly curved with an oblong point. Its leaves make excellent food for stock, and will fatten when everything else fails, but its sap is poisonous to the last degree.

One thing was becoming painfully evident: we were now getting fairly into the region of the drought, which was destined, though fortunately we did not know it, to become far worse before we were done with it.

Our horses were bearing up bravely, and we continually congratulated ourselves on having retained Cyclops and Polyphemus, in preference to the other two. But though they were lasting so well, we had still to take extraordinary care of them, for herbage was growing scantier and scantier every day. The first failure of their strength, we knew, would mean the failure of everything. For this reason, whenever we chanced upon a waterhole round which good grass existed, we would camp a day or two and give them an opportunity of recouping themselves. It was the only way to keep body and soul together in them.

Leaving Maneroo Creek behind us, we crossed the Thompson River, over its dry sandy bed, to find ourselves face to face with a tiny township, perched on a slight elevation. This, our chart told us, was Arrilalah or Forest Grove. But why called Forest Grove we could not understand, for there was not a tree within a couple of miles of it.

Only a short while ago this was a thriving township, with perhaps a couple of hundred inhabitants,

the usual number of stores and inevitable public-houses. Then Longreach, the terminus of the Central Railway from Rockhampton, sprang into existence, and Arrilalah's day was over. Its inhabitants deserted it, bit by bit it dropped out of the race, until, as at the time of our passing, it was little more than a township of the dead. Later on it was described to us as 'a place of dead dogs, broken-down grog shanties, and one drunkard who for old sake's sake sat in the dust of the main street offering to fight creation !'

The same night we struck the Thompson River again, at Westlands Old Station, where we camped a day, prior to striking across country for the head station and Bimerah Creek. For several reasons we were anxious to pursue this course : the chief was, because we should be permitted an opportunity of seeing a successful artesian bore in full working order ; the next, because by going across country, instead of following the river down, we should cut off nearly fifty miles. This latter was a great consideration.

Westlands Station, the property of the Darling Downs & Western Land Company, is a wonderful property, covering an area of 750 square miles and carrying at the time of our visit nearly 150,000 sheep, 200 head of cattle, and 400 horses. The artesian bore has proved an immense success, giving out no less than 60,000 gallons a day of splendid water, a boon the value of which cannot be over-rated in this thirsty land. The temperature of the water on arriving at the surface from a depth of 3,000 feet, is 162 degrees. Hot enough, goodness knows.

There can be no possible doubt that these bores are destined to prove the salvation of Queensland. As a squatter once said to me, 'Overcome the water difficulty, and the grazing capabilities of Western Queensland cannot be surpassed; even the far-famed Darling Downs must sink into insignificance compared with it.' Artesian bores would seem to be the solution of the problem, for they now extend the whole length of the colony from north to south, from Marathon Station, Flinders River, to Hungerford on the border of New South Wales. In time they will alter the whole face of the country, and from being one of the most arid spots on earth will make Queensland a second paradise.

Two of the principal bores in the colony are the Blackall, 1,666 feet deep, and yielding 300,000 gallons per diem, and the Charlesville, 1,380 feet deep, and yielding 3,000,000 gallons per diem.

Leaving Westlands, we carried out our intention and struck across country, hoping to make Bimerah Creek before dusk. It was not pleasant travelling, on account of the heat, the glare, and the flies; but hour after hour we toiled patiently on, wondering why the land-marks described to us did not come into view. The sun sank on to the horizon, then disappeared altogether, but still no sign of the Creek timber appeared. It began to grow dark, and still no sign. We became uneasy: evidently we had missed our way somehow (it was not to be wondered at), and now where we were it was impossible to say. The

situation grew very serious, and at length, dead beat, we resolved to turn out, fix up camp, and try our luck again next morning. As we cast about for a spot, our hearts were rejoiced by the sight of a fire glimmering out of a clump of trees far ahead of us. We struggled on to it, to find that our luck had directed us to a boundary rider's tent, where we were made heartily welcome.

He was a quaint character, our host. His whole life had been spent in the bush, and the greater part of it as a boundary rider, the most desolate of all lives. Located at the back of the run, he sees only his sheep, from month's end to month's end, save when he rides into the head station for rations, or to report disasters. His duties are to look after his sheep and to mend his fences. No wonder he is glad to see visitors, and we flattered ourselves that we were *good* visitors—both good and hungry.

During the evening he evinced a great liking for the lugubrious Pickwick, who sat gazing into the fire with the professional expression of a first class mute upon his face. He said he'd like to have him. We were delighted—we wanted nothing better than a good excuse to give him away.

We went to bed, and immediately Mr. Pickwick began to feel desolate; he moaned softly, he whimpered sadly, and then he howled outright. We soothed him with advice and boots; but nothing would quiet him. At length, for the sake of peace, we were compelled to take him out of the tent, and tie him to a tree in the distance, where he bellowed

melodiously the whole night through. In the morning we prepared to leave him behind us, but our host emphatically said, 'If you do, I'll shoot him !' That was always the way ; no one coveted Pickwick when they got to know him.

As soon as light was in the sky, we harnessed up, got our bearings, and set out on our way again, foolishly omitting to refill our water-bags before starting.

It was a roasting day, and our route lay across an enormous burnt-up plain where the sun glared down with pitiless fury. Owing to the scarcity of grass our horses had had next to nothing to eat, and were now well-nigh knocked up. For this reason, and to lighten the load, we set ourselves for a long tramp. The dreariness of that march surpasses description. Because we had brought no water we grew terribly thirsty before we had gone a couple of miles, and thought of drinks criminally wasted in bygone extravagant days. But this, though edifying, was not satisfying.

Pool after pool, or rather mudhole after mudhole, we explored without success. Our thirst was terrible. Many hours went by, the sun rose to his meridian, and began his descent, then far ahead of us we saw the timber line of the Creek, and half hidden among the foliage, the white roofs of Bimerah Head Station. It was a joyful moment, and we set up a cheer, resolving that, come what might, we would never be foolish enough to embark on a day's march again without first seeing that the water-bag was filled.

Round Bimerah the drought existed in all its

worst forms ; indeed, anything more frightful than the state of the country in this district could not be imagined. Dried-up grass, dried-up waterholes, dead cattle and sheep, was the picture that accompanied us unceasingly. Round every waterhole hundreds of miserable sheep lay bogged, too weak to extricate themselves and every moment growing weaker. But what was misery for the animals was paradise for the crow, for as soon as he saw an unfortunate beast incapable of moving, down he flopped and picked his eyes out while alive, and besides the eyes, great holes in the back and sides. It was not only hopeless but useless to attempt to give the poor animals aid, for they were bogged in numbers that defied one. Even if one did get them out it would but be to let them starve on land.

So shutting our eyes to such horrors, we crossed the horse paddock and drew up at the station door, where we were made cordially welcome, and joyfully accepted the manager's hospitable invitation to spend a week with him, and give our jaded animals a chance to pick up.

CHAPTER XV

BIMERAH—STONEHENGE—A HARD STRUGGLE—JUNDAH

WHEN we arrived at Bimerah, we had, roughly speaking, completed an in and out journey of 1,300 miles from Nor-

manton; therefore we felt not only entitled to, but thoroughly inclined for a spell. And a more comfortable and hospitable resting-place than Bimerah could not possibly have been chosen in the whole length and breadth of the continent. Long, cool, creeper-covered verandahs, in which to idle away warm mornings, an artistic drawing-room, a piano (hitherto an unknown luxury), good cooking, and last, but by no means least, female society. The lady of the house was an ideal hostess, and one cannot say too much in favour of the wife who follows her lord and master into such exile; for the country around Bimerah is lonely and uninteresting to the last degree. Endless mirage-covered plains, and

stern forbidding mountains stretching away to the south-east, constitute the only view. The keynote to it all is Desolation.

When we arrived the drought had laid her finger on Bimerah with crushing results, and the cares and anxieties of the manager were endless. Fortunately he was a man of philosophic temperament, who did his level best, and knew that no man could possibly do more. To add to his worries, however, shearing was in full progress, in a rough shed constructed of uprights and boughs, about a mile from the station house.

Shearing brings together a strange collection of men, not only of shearers and rouseabouts (as the additional helpers are called), but of itinerant vagabonds generally. Let me instance some. On the day following our arrival, just about sun-down, three men make their appearance walking and leading a pack-horse. They say they are acrobats, and they style themselves the Royal Western Queensland Circus Company.

In the evening they give an exhibition of their skill before the shearers in the stockyard, under the glare of blazing torches. Though a poor enough exhibition, the enthusiasm it evokes is extraordinary. Next morning they break camp, and disappear again



over the plains towards the next station, thirty miles distant, to repeat the performance. And this life, they say, they have been leading for many years.

No sooner are they out of sight than another little band of wayfarers puts in an appearance. This one consists of a police trooper, a prisoner, and a black tracker. The prisoner rides between his two captors, and is securely handcuffed. On interrogating the officer in charge, he says he is taking him to Longreach (distant about a hundred miles), for trial, having already brought him nearly a hundred, watching him continually, and sleeping handcuffed to him at night. They pull up near the stockyard for lunch, after which they requisition fresh horses, and again wind their dismal way across the plains. There is no false shame about the prisoner, he only appears sulky and says he wishes they'd give him 'a bit better moke, and he'd give 'em a run for their money, anyhow!' But they have met his like before, and decline to furnish him with the necessary opportunity.

The great festival on an Australian station is the arrival of the mail, weekly, fortnightly, or monthly, as the case may be. At Bimerah it arrives weekly, the mailcoach being a buckboard buggy, drawn by five strong horses. Anxiously is it looked for, and many are the surmises as to its fate if it does not run up to proper time! After the bags are opened, the entire station becomes a letter and paper reading community for hours.

But everything must come to an end, even a pleasant rest, and at length we are reluctantly compelled

to bid our hospitable friends 'good-bye,' and once more take up our march. The ladies of the family set out the same morning, driving themselves, to attend a dance at a neighbouring station some fifty miles away. They think no more of the distance than an English lady would of paying an afternoon call in the next street.

Leaving Bimerah, our track lies along the foot of, and eventually across, the Johnstone Range, over open downs and dense mulga ridges, to a miserable little apology for a township, called Stonehenge. The route is uninteresting to the last degree, and we notice with regret that, however much we may have enjoyed the hospitality of Bimerah, Cyclops and Polyphemus do not show any signs of having benefited by it too.

How and why Stonehenge received its name must ever remain a mystery. It is as like the real Stonehenge as a log hut is like the Tower of London, but at least I will do it the justice to say, that, next to Boulia and Windorah, it is the hottest and the least desirable township through which we had the misfortune to pass. It contains about ten houses, of which perhaps two are grog shanties, the balance being made up of a police hut, a couple of stores, a butcher's and blacksmith's shop, and two or three private dwellings.

Though we were only there a few minutes, Mr. Pickwick found time to make himself objectionable to the dogs of the place, a number of whom clustered round the buggy and barked defiance at him as he sat on the top of the luggage. In a moment of mis-

taken enthusiasm he missed his footing and fell overboard, to dangle by his chain six inches off the ground, the prey and derision of his enemies. When we rescued him, and set him back in his place, he sported flies with a melancholy air for hours afterwards. His pride had received a fall, as well as his body.

In spite of the blandishments of the inhabitants we were not to be persuaded to remain in Stonehenge, but pushed on over another spur of the range, to our



MR. PICKWICK ASSAULTED

old friend the Thompson River, in whose dry bed we were eventually obliged to camp, contenting ourselves with the thick pea-souplike water we were lucky enough to find in a solitary pool there.

It was a dreary spot, made up of dead timber, dried flood wreck, and Polyganum. As usual Mr. Pickwick did not seem at all happy in his mind; the mosquitoes must have found out his map of Asia, and bitten him there, for he moaned so diligently all night that we were compelled to argue with him at repeated intervals.

In addition to our other troubles 'The Bolivar' was becoming a source of constant anxiety to us: the crack in her pole was spreading ominously, her

wheels had to be continually taken off and soaked in water, while it was necessary to insert leather washers in the wheel boxes, on an average, once every day, to prevent her going completely to pieces.

When, next morning, we resumed our march, it was only to observe with alarm that our horses were not only more tucked up than ever, but that they were growing exceedingly leg-weary. Indeed, considering the work they had accomplished, and the heat and the scanty food and water on which they had done it, it was not to be wondered at that they showed signs of failing. For this reason our progress was necessarily slow, while our minds were filled with the gravest apprehensions. The country was growing unmistakably poorer ahead. For miles and miles only parched earth met the eye, not a blade of grass could be discovered, and whenever creeks or waterholes were met with, nothing but a dry heat-cracked surface presented itself.

For five hours we toiled on in this hopeless fashion, as miserable as a pair of bandicoots. At the end of that time we had barely completed a distance of fourteen miles. Then, seeing that our animals absolutely could go no further, we were compelled, whether we liked it or not, to call a halt; this meant a dry camp, or in other words a camp without water. Grass as usual was woefully scanty, and next morning we were compelled for our animals' sakes, as well as our own, to drive them on with blows and abuse in the hope of finding something better. However, towards midday things brightened up, for we struggled on as far as

Carella Cattle Station, to turn loose on the banks of a lovely sheet of water, nearly a mile long by fifty yards wide, round which a little grass, but very little, grew. Our gratitude for the water, and the joy of the poor horses, can better be imagined than described. Even Mr. Pickwick grew excited, and that fact may be set down as one of the most remarkable circumstances of the whole journey.

After a day's rest we pushed on again, at a walking pace, reaching the township of Jundah towards sundown, with our animals, this time, hopelessly knocked up.

Jundah is another abominable hole, but it has one redeeming feature, it is situated on a splendid permanent waterhole of the Thompson River; a waterhole many miles long, and of considerable depth. The township itself consists of a few wooden houses, two or three third-rate grog shanties, a couple of stores, and a commodious district police station. When we arrived, the heat, the flies, the sand, and the dust were in full possession. Without losing time we hunted up the police station, and instituted inquiries as to the state of the country ahead. The report was not hopeful. The sergeant told us that, in the recollection of the oldest inhabitant, the district had never passed through such an awful season. In response to our questions as to which route he would advise us to pursue, he seemed most doubtful, but eventually recommended us to attempt the track *via* Windorah to Cooper's Creek, thence by Innaminka into South Australia. Obtain-

ing from his store a bag of coarse native hay, we returned to the township and purchased two half bushels of oats and bran, for which we paid the enormous price of twenty-five shillings. Then, seeking a convenient spot on the river bank, we fixed up camp, watered and fed our exhausted horses, and deliberated as to our future movements.

We could not help seeing that to attempt anything further, with only our present enfeebled animals to depend upon, would be worse than madness, so we determined to lay out some of our now very much reduced capital on the purchase of two fresh steeds, if anything worth having in the equine way could be obtained in Jundah, where everything was starving. At first, indeed, this did seem unlikely, but eventually we managed to get two sorry wrecks, in but little better condition than our own. We paid the extortionate sum asked for them, and led them down to the river bank, where we gave them a hearty feed of bran and oats, and camped them with Messrs. Cyclops and Polyphemus, who did not regard them with any too much favour.



A QUEENSLAND BLACK

The waterhole, we were pleased to discover, teemed with fish, so, pressing into our service a tame black fellow from a camp hard by, we soon had two or three members of the finny tribe grilling

on the embers. In spite of their insipid and muddy flavour we relished them immensely. Hunger is a piquant sauce, and we had had nothing worth eating for two or three days past.

As we turned into our blankets, thick clouds were rising into the sky, thunder soon followed, and with it every sign of a wet night. This, we reflected dismally, would mean heavy tracks upon the morrow. However, we need not have worried ourselves, it was only a false alarm: in the morning all the clouds had disappeared.

With the first streaks of day we were on the road again, driving our new purchases, and dragging our faithful friends Cyclops and Polyphemus behind us.

As I have mentioned before, it was Mr. Pickwick's custom to journey on the rolls of swags and stores, secured to the back of our seat by a short chain. When we had been travelling half an hour or so, I chanced to look round, and was surprised to find that he had disappeared. We searched among the packages, but not a sign of him could we discover, then his dangling chain caught our eyes, and on pulling it in, Mr. Pickwick appeared at the other end. He had been hanging for nearly half-an-hour, the weight of his body on the collar preventing him from singing out. Beyond being a trifle more melancholy, however, he did not seem to mind it much, but spent the remainder of the morning sporting flies on his bald patch with his accustomed equanimity.

The track we followed could not be called, even

by its most enthusiastic admirers, a good one ; for this reason and on account of the heavy sand, and the hard pulling it entailed upon the horses, we were compelled to walk more than three parts of the day's distance. This in itself was the reverse of inspiring, but we had worse things in store for us. The new horses were not a success ; they were as weak as kittens and as slow as crabs. The heat was terrible ; our thermometer, at midday, totalled 112° in the shade. Lovely mirages accompanied us ; extensive visions of beautiful lakes, perfect in every way, even to the detail of wild fowl and overhanging trees. They certainly presented more agreeable pictures than the barren, burnt-up country through which we were, in reality, travelling. But though we ought to have been grateful, somehow we were not.

Talking of mirages reminds me that I once heard a story of some sheep which followed an exquisite lake from Queensland into Western Australia, trying to come up to it for a drink. The brother of the man who told me this was a superintendent in a Sunday school, and held a responsible government position ; like George Washington, he boasted he had never told a lie !

Our camp that night was a wretched one (it seems my lot to chronicle nothing but wretched camps) ; the new horses were inclined to stray, what water we had was bad, and added to these drawbacks the mosquitoes were most assiduous in their attentions. The mosquito is an egotistical insect who, not content with being aware of his own existence,

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wants everybody else to be aware of it too. (This definition is placed at the disposal of the scientific world for use in catalogues, and may be used free of charge by charitable institutions.)

Shortly after five o'clock A.M. we broke camp and departed, driving our new purchases. The heat, as soon as the sun rose, was almost overpowering, and, as on the previous day, the route was villanously sandy, entailing the heaviest of heavy pulling. Before our midday camp was reached, we were obliged to make a change in horses, the Jundah animals being quite knocked up. We passed no travellers now, and, with the exception of the dead and dying stock in the waterholes, saw no animals whatsoever. Nothing seemed to flourish in this region, save the black crow, who followed us through each day's march, saying continually—

‘Caw—caw! When'll ye die? Caw—caw! When'll ye die?’

Once more we had a vile camp, once more grass was scarce, and once more we had to content ourselves with stagnant green filth in place of water. Not a particle of food could our horses obtain with the exception of parched mulga leaves, and even to secure these we had to cut down a number of trees.

To chronicle such deprivations is dispiriting, let us therefore skip the next march, and simply say that by noon on the day following, a desolate collection of still more desolate habitations had appeared before us, and we knew that we were in sight of Windorah.

CHAPTER XVI

WINDORAH—TERRIBLE STATE OF COUNTRY—WE ARE AGAIN OBLIGED TO TURN BACK—HORSES DIE—PRIVATIONS—THE BARCOO—WELFORD DOWNS—BOUNDARY RIDER'S HUT—MILO



IT is sufficient criticism of Windorah to say that it is bounded on three sides by Despair, and on the fourth by the Day of Judgment. In fact there exists a superstition in Queensland that the Government locks up, on a charge of lunacy, any person who can exist there for more than six months without showing signs of madness. And I can quite understand it. I am sure six days of Windorah would be quite enough to drive me into epileptic fits or manslaughter.

As at Jundah, immediately on arrival we went to the police, and asked to be supplied with information regarding the country ahead. The report was even more discouraging than before. Numbers of parties had endeavoured to reach the South Australian border, but had invariably been

driven back by the drought. Nothing but absolute despair and chaos reigned in that direful region. What to do we knew not. Evidently, to go on was hopeless, but from what we had just passed through, it seemed well nigh as bad to turn back. We spent the afternoon in earnest consultation, and the upshot of it all was that we resolved to camp near the township that night, and to commence our return journey with daylight next morning. Half way back we would endeavour to strike across country to the Barcoo River, in the hope of coming out somewhere near Welford Downs Cattle Station, after which if we were lucky, we would try to work down Powell's Creek, and so on to the Bulloo. Here, we had heard, copious rains had fallen. It would have been simply suicidal, seeing the condition of our horses, and the long stages they would be compelled to make, to think of returning all the way to Jundah, and from there to follow down the other side of the triangle to the Barcoo. However, willy nilly, whatever we decided on had to be undertaken quickly.

Before it grew dark, we took the precaution to obtain a fresh supply of bush hay to carry along with us. This we hoped might keep life in the animals till we should strike the station. And as it turned out it was well that we did so.

Next morning, putting the best face we could on it, we started off. We were beginning to tire of this continual heartache and anxiety, but as we had got ourselves into the position, and had no one to thank for it but ourselves, it behoved us to make the best of it.

Every hour the heat seemed to grow greater, and the brick-like earth reflected the sun glare to an appalling degree. The wheels of our buggy appeared to dish more and more, the pole crack to spread, the harness to become weaker and weaker, and at this juncture our new horses began to make themselves the sources of terrible anxiety to us, getting even into a worse condition than the two old fellows who had brought us so satisfactorily all the way from Normanton. They stumbled continually, they refused to pull, and in fact they were in every way exasperating and troublesome.

The first night out from Windorah we camped on a small, almost dried-up waterhole, near where we had spent a night on our downward journey. Here our supply of native hay stood us in good stead, and we blessed our foresight in bringing it; had we not done so, our horses would have been compelled to go entirely without.

Long before sunrise next morning we woke to enter upon the most eventful twenty-four hours of all our wanderings. Almost in silence we ate our meagre meal and prepared for the journey. The horses had not wandered from the camp, but had stood throughout the night with dejected bearings just beyond the fire. Their very attitudes seemed to presage some misfortune. While the Long'un harnessed the two new animals, I broke up the camp and packed the buggy. With tears streaming down his face, Mr. Pickwick mounted to his place. We

ranged ourselves on either side, and the march commenced.

Departing from the track, we plunged into the scrub and steered for Welford Downs. Among the trees the heat was stifling. Only the rattle of our progress (for our old buggy on the march was as noisy as a tinker's van), the dismal caw-caw of the crows, and the grating of cicadas in the trees was to be heard. In this fashion for hours we crawled along, making the slowest progress. At midday we camped for a brief space to give our animals a small supply of the valuable hay, and as soon as it was eaten resumed our march till sundown.

As the sun sank behind the trees, we began to look about us for the waterholes we had been assured we should strike, but not a sign of one was to be seen. On and on we struggled, keeping a vigilant lookout, but at length, when darkness fell we were obliged to give up the search and camp where we were. As they had been pining for water all day long, this dry camp meant untold misery for our animals. Fortunately for ourselves, however, we still had our smallest canvas bag nearly full.

All that night we lay awake, torn by anxiety, and before the moon had dropped were afoot again. Then occurred our most trying experience. We found that somehow or other, in unpacking the buggy, or maybe it had got jolted out *en route*, we had lost our sole remaining compass—the very thing that was most essential to our safety. In vain we searched and searched, turned out our pockets and packs,

hunted over every inch of the camp, and even returned some distance upon our tracks, but without success. It was undoubtedly gone!

Then we began to imagine that Fate must be indeed against us. Our situation was as desperate as it well could be. What to do we knew not. It was impossible to remain where we were, and yet it seemed equally dangerous to proceed. We argued it out in despair. At length, knowing the direction



in which we had been travelling the day before, we decided to steer as near to that as we could, trusting to Providence to bring us out on to the river at last.

The horses by this time were in such a piteous condition that as it was impossible for us to add our weights to the buggy, so hour in, hour out, we struggled along beside them, toiling through the heavy sand, preys to the gloomiest and most agonising

thoughts. Then, to add to our anxieties, one of the new horses dropped, and it was some time before we could get him on to his legs again. When we did, we continued our journey as before. He was, however, hopelessly done, and about a mile further went under again. We couldn't stop; there was nothing for it, therefore, but to leave him. Observing the crows hovering about, and noting his condition, we thought it kindest to put an end to him at once, rather than to let these birds pick him to pieces while alive. Accordingly, a kindly bullet terminated his existence, and, before we were out of sight, hundreds of crows were perched upon his body, cawing and vehemently disputing it.

All that miserable day, weary and footsore, we struggled on and on. The parched earth, the leaden sky, the dull dead-green trees, the scattered skeletons of perished animals, and the constant cawing of each watchful crow seemed to take the life out of every footstep. The aspect of the country never changed. Clay-pan and sandhill, sandhill and clay-pan, was the everlasting order of the march. At length, towards evening, a terrible discovery dawned upon us. Bit by bit, things seemed to be growing strangely familiar. We noticed trees, etc., we seemed to have seen before, and within half an hour we crossed unmistakably recent buggy tracks. Next moment we recognised the plain upon which we had camped the previous night. *We were 'bushed.'* *For hours we had been travelling in a circle!*

This discovery had a stunning effect on us, for

besides our idle waste of strength, our waterbags were both empty, and there was now no chance of filling them. This last and bitterest misfortune was well-nigh too much for us ; it seemed almost better to lie down and die than to struggle further.

Unable to proceed another yard, utterly worn out, we camped where we were, on that hopeless barren spot, not a hundred yards from where we had lain down the previous night. We were too thirsty to eat and too miserable to take any interest in our surroundings. Our wretched horses had not tasted water for nearly forty hours, and were just on the borders of starvation. Poor dumb beasts, their misery was heart-rending.

What a night it was ! With the rising of the moon, blood red upon the horizon, a soft breeze came moaning like a Banshee through the stunted timber. A morpork hooted at us from a neighbouring tree top, ants crawled all over us, neither of us slept a wink, and the horses hardly stirred all night.

Weary and sick at heart, we harnessed up again by moonlight and struck off a little north of east. Before we had proceeded four miles the second new horse showed signs of exhaustion ; finally he too dropped and had to be finished off in the same manner as his companion. Again the crows were satisfied.

Then we knew that our only hope lay in lightening the buggy. Accordingly, all our cherished belongings, except absolute necessities, had to go, thrown away into the sand to become the property

of the first wayfarer who should be unfortunate enough to pass that way.

On and on we staggered, cheering each other as best we could. Whenever a hillock came into sight, likely to afford a view of the surrounding country, we climbed to its summit and scanned the district; but only stunted timber and red sandhills could be seen, no sign of water or the river gums.



Our own thirst by this time was excruciating, our tongues began to swell and our skin to crack for lack of moisture, yet ever and ever the same picture lay before us: rising and falling ground, deep red sand, clay-pans, mirages, and dried-up watercourses. In addition to all this our stores were quite exhausted. Everything seemed against us. It was agony to walk, and yet we dared not stop. As we both confessed afterwards, it would have been heaven to have been able to lie down and die.

Soon after mid-day, on rising out of a dip, a steep sand ridge presented itself. With infinite pains we

toiled to its summit. What the labour cost us will never be understood, but the view which met our eyes amply compensated for everything. We were at last rewarded, for in the valley below us could be seen giant eucalypti, *betokening the presence of the river!* We were beside ourselves with gratitude; we could only stand and point towards it in speechless joy. Then with a speed that was almost frantic we rejoined our horses on the plain and hastened towards that Eldorado. Though it was not more than five miles ahead of us it took us nearly three hours to reach it. What if it should turn out dry? We never thought of that; our only idea was to reach it, if we died in the attempt.

When we did arrive at it, we found a transparent pool some two hundred and fifty yards long by thirty wide, surrounded by lofty eucalypti and possessing on its banks a plentiful supply of long coarse grass. Forgetting every thought of prudence, we threw ourselves down and drank in the clear water, till we could drink no more. Surely there never was such water; it was more delicious than the rarest wine; it was more precious than diamonds; we stripped off everything and plunged in to absorb it through our parched skins.

But when we had drunk we became ravenously hungry, and there was nothing for us to eat. Our horses fared splendidly, for grass was abundant. But we were not Nebuchadnezzar, and grass would not satisfy us. It was now our turn to go without. The pool teemed with fish, but though we spent a

long time trying, we were not able, without the necessary appliances, to catch one. It began to look as if we had only escaped death from thirst to perish by starvation. But towards nightfall the Long'un discovered a big iguana, and, with the assistance of Mr. Pickwick, succeeded in catching him. No sooner was he dead than we had his tail upon the fire, and a more succulent morsel I never remember to have partaken of. It was for all the world like the tenderest chicken.



IGUANA

Though we were to all intents and purposes saved, our position was still a sufficiently bad one, for though we knew we must be on the Barcoo, yet we had very little idea as to our exact whereabouts. We might be either above or below the station we wanted to reach. As far as we could discover, no tracks passed anywhere near our camp, and, for aught we knew, we might be many miles away from the place we wanted. For this reason we agreed that it would

be the most foolish policy possible to leave good feed and water, with our horses in their present condition, in an attempt to go on, and yet, for our own sakes, we could not remain existing on iguanas and borer caterpillars for ever.

At length, on the third day, our horses a little improved by the rest and food, we harnessed and started off again, following the river up in the hopes of striking some trail which might lead us to the station. During the afternoon our wishes were gratified in the shape of a faint track which eventually brought us into another, which in its turn led us on to Welford Downs. Who shall say what a relief it was to us to see those roofs ahead, after all we had gone through to reach them?

Though but a poor homestead, the kindness of the manager and his family was exceeding great; at their invitation we were their guests for two whole days, spending the time recruiting ourselves and listening to the direful state of the country about.

Then, bidding our new made friends adieu, and taking care to replenish our stores before starting, we struck out for Powell's Creek, *en route* for Adavale.

Beyond Welford, the appearance of the country changes; the timber becomes larger, and bird-life more numerous. But it was all terribly, woefully dry.

On the road, in a most lonely spot, we came upon the grave of Mr. Welford, the pioneer of the district, who was murdered some years ago by the blacks. From all accounts the police sent out to avenge his death took terrible vengeance, shooting

the natives down like dogs. The plain is averred to be haunted, but though we camped hard by the grave, we saw nothing ; if we had, I think we should have been thankful for the variety. A ghost would at least have broken the horrible monotony.

Dusk had fallen before we got into camp. The situation was bleak and eerie, but we could see that we were not the only people in the neighbourhood, for, about a hundred yards further down the river, another camp fire was burning brightly. As soon as we had finished our meal, we tramped across to ascertain who our neighbour might be. To our surprise it turned out to be a woman, and a young and comely woman at that. She was cooking at the fire, her saddle and pack horses grazing close by. To add to our wonderment a baby lay fast asleep on a pile of blankets by her side, a charming little cherub, curled up like a dormouse, with his thumb in his tiny mouth.

With all the ease of an old bushman she bade us 'good evening,' and proffered us tea and johnny cake. Then, as we sat round the fire, she told us her curious story. She was a carrier's daughter and a boundary rider's widow ; she had never seen a town in her life, and, until she had entered her husband's hut, had never slept under a roof. When her baby was three months old her husband committed suicide, and she was thrown upon her own resources with her child to keep. The squatter in whose employ her husband had been, made her a present of the horses, and, since then, she had been riding the country, with

her baby strapped on the saddle before her, in search of work, finding her own way, and camping in the lonely bush by herself every night. She had tried domestic service at stations, but her child was considered a drawback, and she was continually discharged as being too rough. What she wanted was a fencing contract, she said, post hole sinking, or something of that sort, at which she could earn good wages and keep the child. 'I'm as strong as any man in these parts,' she continued, 'and every bit as good a bushman!'

'Well!' I said, 'when your child grows up he will have good cause to be grateful to his mother!'

'Poor little kinchin,' she replied, and something very like tears rose in her eyes. 'It ain't every kiddie, I reckon, as has to have the front of a saddle for a cradle!'

When next morning we drove by the spot she was gone. Only a few smouldering ashes remained to remind us of her. Go on and prosper, brave soul! Let us hope your son may repay you in the days to be!

Leaving Welford lagoons behind us, we continued on to Coalie, camping at what was once the cattle station, but is now only a boundary rider's hut. The boundary rider was a quaint old character, who, for many years had lived in this hut, with but one companion, a large tabby cat, of which he was inordinately proud. During the evening, lying round the fire in our blankets, he told us many stories, among others the following, which struck us as extraordinary.

On one occasion, having been ordered to another part of the Run for a month or so, and not liking to leave his cat to the mercy of passing travellers, he carried her, enclosed in an old leather mail bag, to the head station to be taken care of. Either the friend to whom he entrusted her did not attend to her properly, or else she tired of her new quarters; at any rate the animal escaped, and by some extraordinary means, found her way right back to her old abode, fifty miles across the ranges, only to discover the place shut up and her master gone. Instead of running wild, as most cats would have done under similar circumstances, she remained for nearly three months in the neighbourhood, quietly awaiting his return, living on birds and whatever she could pick up. When he did arrive, the greeting was most affecting, and he vowed they should never again be parted. It was a pathetic little tale, and it was not until some time later that we found it was all a lie. Still it was a good lie; I'll say that for it!

Next day we entered the dull funereal ranges, and, about noon, reached Gooyah, an out station of Milo. After camping the night there, we proceeded to the head station, about twenty-five miles distant. Milo is the largest sheep station in the world, and carries no less than half a million sheep, besides fifteen thousand cattle and many hundred horses.

A day later we drove into the main street of the township of Adavale. Distance completed from Normanton about 1,570 miles, and from Townsville 1,964.

CHAPTER XVII

*ADAVALE — THE BULLOO RIVER — EMUDILLA — JIM COLLINS
— COMONGIN — CORROBBOREE — BUSHED — GOURYANAH
— COWLEY PLAINS*



though, how people can
to live in any of them

matter of mystery to me. We had, long before,
arranged that our letters should be sent here, conse-
quently we had quite a budget to receive. It was
like resuming touch with the world to look once
more upon English postage stamps, and for an hour
we were absorbed in the fascination of home news.

Leaving Adavale, we departed over a rough and
dry stage towards the Bulloo River. After the first few
miles, however, the appearance of the country began

OR a bush
township,
Adavale is
a pretty
enough place.

At any rate it
is a decided
improvement
on Stonehenge,

Jundah, or Windorah;

ever bring themselves
will always remain a

U

to improve. Well-filled waterholes became more frequent, and the grass was not only more abundant, but beautifully green. It was like a new earth, and, after a few camps (for we did not hurry ourselves), our horses became like different animals. Cyclops carried his banana-like tail with a new air, while Polyphemus arched his neck like a two hundred guinea brougham horse ; even Mr. Pickwick looked a little less doleful under the changed circumstances.



NATIVE COMPANIONS

Some of our camps were perfectly charming : overhanging trees, good water for cooking and bathing, and plenty of grass, not only for the horses, but to make the most luxurious of beds. What could we have wished for more? Birds and fish were abundant, and here, for the first time, we met with the yellow crested White Cockatoo, the Native Companion, the Bower, the Apostle, the Butcher, and the Bell bird. All are unique in their own different fashions.

The Native Companion, is a tall, slender, grey

bird, something after the style of a heron, and is quite a character in his way. It is an amusing sight to watch a number of them playing on the sand-banks at dusk. They march up and down, advance, wheel, and execute the most intricate and involved manœuvres, with all the precision and *aplomb* of trained soldiers. They even dance quadrilles and lancers with wonderful accuracy, and their performances on the pearly grey sands, among the long shadows of approaching night, have a most weird and picturesque effect. Fortunately for their own sakes, they are useless for food, but as pets they are much prized.

The Bower Bird, though a smaller fellow, is not behind his friend in point of interest. Among other things, he is an architect of no mean order, inasmuch as he builds for himself a bewitching little bower of grass and sticks. This is his treasure house, where he collects every bright and glittering object that attracts his fancy, particularly stones from the dry creek beds, amusing himself with them as a child plays with glittering beads. For this reason valuable gems may not unfrequently be discovered in his bower, their brilliance having caught his eye when on the search for playthings.

The Butcher Bird somewhat resembles an English thrush, and possesses the power of imitating any animal, with a ventriloquial effect truly remarkable. The Apostle Bird's peculiarity is always to move about with eleven of his fellows. And the Bell Bird the bushman has good reason to know on account of

his note being an exact imitation of a horse bell, which, when searching in thick scrub for horses, is apt to be terribly misleading.

The country along the Bulloo is both well timbered and well grassed, mulga, gidea, yapunya, and gum trees being most *en évidence*.

Our first station down the river was Emudilla, an out station of gigantic Milo. We found them in the midst of shearing, and too busy to attend to strangers. The manager's hut was a miserable

place, not fit for a dog to live in, and after camping the night there, we headed away along the Bulloo for Comongin.



JIM COLLINS

Crossing a lightly timbered plain, about five or six miles from the station, we met with a curious experience. Jogging quietly along in the eye of the burning sun, wishing to goodness we were anywhere but where we were, our horses suddenly came

to a dead stop before something huddled up on the ground. Our first impulse was to jump out and see what it was, but before we had time to move it rose, and we beheld the most weird and unearthly creature ever dignified with the name of man. He was of about middle age, very tall and thin, his clothes hung in rags about him, and to all appearance he was suffering from a terrible attack of ophthalmia, combined with a fit of delirium tremens. He rose out

of the sand like a spirit of the waste, and confronted us. Then in a voice of extraordinary monotony, illustrative of the condition of his mind, he said :

‘Now don’t you be afraid of me—have a drink, do! I’m old Jim Collins, old Jim Collins, gone a mucker—poor old Jim! have a drink, do! Lord, but I’m dead broke; you should see the little devils—little green devils with pink eyes that run after me—through the cotton bush singing, “Old Jim Collins, gone dead broke—gone dead broke.” Lord! and to think I’ve got a brother in London, who’s—well, never you mind what he is, but take a drink, do!’

We declined with thanks, having a pretty fair idea of what the stuff was made of, and tried to move forward, but he clung to the wheels, babbling on in the same foolish fashion. ‘Lor! you wouldn’t hurt old Jim Collins, I know! I’m old Jim Collins—poor old Jim, gone dead broke, and chased through the cotton bush by little green devils—little green devils with white legs and pink eyes, and Lord! look at ’em there, forty thousand million of ’em!’ etc. etc.

On our asking where he had come from, he pointed over his shoulder to nowhere in particular, saying—‘From the Dead Finish, back there. You’ll take me back, won’t you now? You’ll take me back to the pub. Say you will or I’ll pull your livers out! Don’t leave me here to die—old Jim Collins—I’m desperate—Lor!’ you don’t know what devils have been following me through the bush. Take me back to the pub, d’ye hear! or I’ll murder yer. I’m old Jim Collins,’ etc. etc.

But for more reasons than one, it would have been folly to have taken him back, so, seizing our opportunity, we whipped up and left him, standing hopelessly in the centre of the plain, looking after us. Half an hour later, we encountered a bullock team travelling in the same direction; the bullocky promised to keep an eye open for him.

These grog shanties, or 'dead finishes' as they are often termed, are the curse of the bush, and in no



A DEAD FINISH

other colony are they so bad as in Queensland. Anything like the scenes enacted in them there would not be believed or tolerated in print. But they are of everyday occurrence, and from the fact that they are carried on hundreds of miles from civilisation, no one is the least bit the wiser.

As a rule, the shanty is a rude log or galvanised iron hut, which springs into existence beside the track, at a spot convenient to the surrounding stations. Here the shanty-keeper commences his

nefarious traffic with very little real stock, the component parts of the various liquors sold being vitriol and kerosene, with a little flavouring mixture thrown in.

Owing to its position, it is generally impossible for any station hand, making for civilisation, to avoid passing the door. But woe betide that unfortunate man if he allows himself to be prevailed upon to enter. The following is the usual course of procedure.

We will presume that John Brown, of Yapunya Station, is going to take his holiday in the south. Perhaps, as is very likely, he has not been off the station for three years, during which time he has accumulated an amount on the station books equal to perhaps one hundred and fifty pounds. On asking for his cheque, it is given him, with much good advice against the attractions of the 'dead finishes' in the neighbourhood. Boasting his strength of mind, he saddles his riding and pack horses, and sets off, contented with himself and the world in general. It is a long and dusty journey, and just as he is thinking about camping for the night, the shanty appears in sight. He argues that he cannot possibly harm himself if he pulls up at the door just for one drink—only one. Maybe, one of the landlord's daughters, nieces, or female cousins, catches his eye, and he then remembers that he has not seen a female for three years. He takes just one nip of whisky, and that one, manufactured on the premises, does the business. Five minutes later, he has determined just to spend the night there, and to resume his journey in the morning; but in half an hour he is hopelessly incapable, has

planked his cheque on the counter, and told the landlord to let him know when it is finished. After that, for many days, he has no knowledge of passing events, and when he comes to his senses, it is only to find himself in the dead house, as the log hut at the rear of the hotel is called, about as near a dead man as he well can be. Then, nearly perishing for a drink, he crawls into the bar, to find his cheque finished (or said to be) and his horse and gear the property of the landlord for an additional debt. He is informed that while drunk he *stood* champagne for every passer-by, and in evidence of the fact, he is shown empty bottles lying freely scattered about the place. In reality he has given the landlord a cheque for one hundred and fifty pounds, in exchange for about five pounds' worth of doctored liquor! Comment is needless!

In order that he shall not carry away with him a bad impression of the place, he is presented with a bottle of manufactured whisky to see him home. With the help of this, he returns to the station a very much sadder—though, I fear, but little wiser—man. This craving for drink reasserts itself at intervals, and every time his cheque grows sufficiently large, it goes the same way as the first. After a big shearing, or a general muster, when numbers of men are abroad in the district, everyone with plenty of money to spend, these back country 'dead finishes' are nothing more nor less than little hells. It is a well-known jest with landlords, that they 'have men earning good wages for them on many of the surrounding properties.'

Two days after leaving Emudilla we reached Comongin, to find them also busy with their shearing. The homestead is built on a little hill, overlooking a lovely lagoon, which teems with fish and wild fowl. This station is a great meeting-place for natives, and we were fortunate enough while there to be permitted an opportunity of witnessing a Corrobboree. It was a strange and impressive sight.

Viewed by the light of enormous fires, the figures of the dancers, streaked with white paint into the resemblance of skeletons, leaping and bounding in perfect unison under the massive gum trees, to the music of wailing voices and beating drums, produced an effect not easily to be forgotten. One moment they were depicting a bloodthirsty battle, the next a kangaroo hunt, but it was all with the same marvellous precision and accuracy. No trained ballet could have given a better performance, and long after we had retired we could hear them keeping it up with unimpaired vigour. A Corrobboree is generally held to celebrate the meeting of old friends after a long parting. It was so on this occasion. Unfortunately, however, the same friendly spirit did not animate it throughout, for before the night was over, a sort of Donnybrook occurred, and next morning quite a dozen warriors were whining round the station house for shin plaster.

Leaving North Comongin, we made a two days' stage down the river to South Comongin, camping a night, *en route*, in a charming nook on the river-bank,

beneath the shelter of some of the stateliest old gum-trees I ever remember to have seen.

At South Comongin we had an earnest talk with the manager on the prospects of the track further along the Bulloo. Strangely enough the plenteous rains which had fallen lower down had stopped here, and from the accounts of some of the drovers who had come up from Thargomindah, the drought was as severe below this point as in any other part of the country through which we had passed. The manager's advice to us was to strike due east to a waterhole named Gooryanah, thence to Bechel Creek, and to follow that watercourse down until we could cross on to the Warrego river, and so on, *via* Cunamulla, to the New South Wales border.

Accordingly, next morning, after an early breakfast, off we set for Gooryanah, where we were told we should find some teams (carriers) camped, the men connected with which would direct us on to Cowley Plains Cattle Station, distant some sixty miles. By the directions given us we understood that we ought to strike Gooryanah about midday.

Our route lay through dense mulga scrub, alternating with patches of open plain, dreary and desolate to the eye, but very comforting from the fact that horse feed was abundant. Under a blazing sun we toiled along, keeping a bright look out for the waterhole and the teams, but no sign of either could we see. Midday came and went, the afternoon wore on, the sun dropped lower and lower on to the horizon, yet no sign came of what we sought. Evidently,

once more, something had gone wrong. We fought against the idea, but at length it was to be resisted no longer, and we were again compelled to own ourselves bushed. What was worse, we had been so confident of finding the waterhole and the teams, that we had only brought a little lunch with us. Worse still, owing to the heat of the day, our waterbags were well-nigh empty. There was nothing for it but to camp where we were.

All the next day, without food or water, we struggled on; the same agonising symptoms of thirst manifested themselves as on a similar occasion. Though we explored every likely spot, not a drop of water could we find, and at last the advisability of killing one of our horses and drinking his blood, in order to sustain life in us, was seriously contemplated. Horrible as the idea was, it seemed the only possible way out of the difficulty. We decided, however, to postpone the notion until everything else failed, and just at nightfall, as if to reward us for our endurance, we came upon a small creek, and following that down, upon a still smaller hole of thick muddy water, in which innumerable animals lay dead. Our delight was unbounded, and, with our usual sagacity, we said we had struck Gooryanah.

While the Long'un took the tired horses across the creek in search of grass, I fixed up camp. It was an almost useless proceeding, for we had nothing to eat, and even our supply of tea was well-nigh exhausted. Taking the billy down to the water, I was in the act of filling it, when I heard horses brushing through

the bushes. On looking up I found a stockman and a black boy approaching me. They had been out hunting for horses, they said, and were going to camp near us. I told them of our troubles, and described our good fortune in striking Gooryanah in such an unexpected fashion. 'Striking Gooryanah!' said the stockman; 'this ain't Gooryanah. You're close on fifty miles from it. You've come back on your tracks; you're near North Comongin, half a mile from where you camped four nights ago. You've been going round with a vengeance.'

This was news bad enough to break a man's heart. Here we were fifty miles back on our tracks, with worn-out horses, no food, and all that distance to make up again. If it hadn't been for the two men watching me, I believe I should have sat down and cried. But if our luck was so bad, it was indeed fortunate that we had met these men, otherwise God alone knows how far we might not have wandered. What was still more fortunate, they were able to spare us some damper and jerked beef.

A worse night's camp than that I do not remember. The night was oppressively hot, our disappointment would not let us sleep, and the mosquitoes would have forced bad language out of the Pope himself. We tossed and tumbled, swore and scratched, half the night.

Next day there was nothing for it but to make the long stage for Gooryanah. It was an awful, awful journey: red sand, millions of flies that crawled into one's eyes, mouth, and ears at the rate of

hundreds per minute, a heat in the mulga like the blast of the furnace doors of Sheol, tired horses, and a blissful uncertainty about our destination. It was not cheerful, but it was that or nothing.

At length at the end of fourteen weary hours of crawling, we opened out on to a plain which possessed all the characteristics of Gooryanah, and here we alighted, thoroughly knocked up. Letting the horses go, we camped under a *tope* of trees beside a dried-up waterhole. No sign of water, however, could be seen anywhere, and after a brief rest we agreed to separate in search of it, one going west and the other east. At the end of two hours I returned unsuccessful, but when I had been in camp half an hour or so, the Long'un put in an appearance, with his water-bag and billy-can full of a thick mixture which might once (I say *once* advisedly) have been water. He had procured it from a hole nearly three miles away.

Jerked beef, a wedge of damper, and tea, thick with mud, constituted our evening meal. While we eat it, we criticised the weather. There was every appearance of a heavy thunderstorm. As night set in, these signs increased. Enormous clouds rolled into the sky, banking up one on the top of the other, till not a star was visible. The wind dropped altogether, and an unearthly stillness reigned. Like frightened sheep we huddled together, talking in hushed voices, and wondering when the performance would commence. Then, suddenly, there was a flash of lightning sharp as a razor edge,

and next moment a clap of thunder that seemed fairly to shake the earth. Another and another followed, until it was playing all round us. Flash, bang, rattle and rumble : it was for all the world like an enormous battle. Now and again great trees in the scrub beyond the plain fell with awful crashes, and we thanked our stars that we had pitched our camp in the open instead of in the forest. The storm lasted all night, but save a few drops, hardly any rain fell. Towards daylight the clouds boomed off, and another weary day began.

Whether it was the water we had drunk or the food we had eaten I cannot say, but at any rate, as soon as we got up we were both horribly sick. For my own part I never felt so wretched in my life. My one thought was gratitude that my boots were laced on tight, otherwise I truly believe I should have got rid of them too, so complete was the clearance. For nearly half an hour this nausea continued, until it seemed impossible for us to travel ; but we reflected that to remain where we were spelt starvation, and starvation spells death, so willy nilly we were compelled to hitch up and proceed.

Three or four miles further on we came upon the real Gooryanah, where we found, as we had been told, half a dozen carriers' teams camped round the waterhole. They directed us aright, and at the end of another long day's stage, during which we took it in turns to stop and be ill, we drove into the horse paddock and pulled up before the verandah of Cowley Plains Head Station.

CHAPTER XVIII

*COWLEY PLAINS—BECHEL CREEK—RIVER SWIMMING—
BLACK SOIL—CUNAMULLA—THE WARREGO—BARRINGUN*



IF we have in our constitutions any gratitude for benefits received, some of that store must be expended on the kind folk of Cowley Plains. For their kindnesses equalled any we had yet received in Queensland.

Out there in that lonely wilderness the owner, a warm-hearted, hospitable Highlander, has built himself a home which, for comfort, equals anything to be found in Adelaide, Melbourne, or Sydney. Cowley Plains is not a big station, but it is very complete. The size of the run is only three hundred square miles, and yet it carries, on an average, about three thousand head of shorthorn cattle, as well as five hundred well-bred horses. Horses are Mr. Macdonald's particular hobby, and he has good reason to be proud of his stud. But even with its completeness, Cowley

Plains is a lonely spot. The nearest township of any size is Charleville, a hundred miles distant ; and the journey between the two places is not a thing to be lightly undertaken.

For a fortnight we enjoyed the hospitality of this charming station, then reprovisioning ourselves, and with sincere expressions of our thanks, bade the owner, his wife and children farewell, and returned to our weary journey.

When we arrived at the station we had intended to bestow our friend Mr. Pickwick upon its occupants, but after their kindness to us we relinquished that idea. It would have been a poor return for all they had done for us. However, we were resolved to leave him behind on the first opportunity. It should not have been a difficult matter, for in some ways he was not a bad looking animal. His back was his one weak point. As soon as dog-fanciers saw that map of Asia, they relinquished all desire to become his possessors, and became unanimous in their wishes never to see his face, or rather his back, again.

As we left Cowley Plains a slight shower fell, which increased to a vigorous downpour as we entered the scrub beyond the horse paddock. Harder and harder it pelted down, rendering the soft earth softer every minute. The thick black soil made it very heavy pulling for our horses ; the wheels sank deeper and deeper every yard, and at length, after continual diggings out, and troubles of a similar kind, we were perforce compelled to camp in the middle of the afternoon, our stage but half done. We were a

miserable couple ; our blankets were wet, our clothes were soaked through and through, and as we couldn't light a fire, there was no means of drying them. It was a damp camp with a vengeance.

Next morning we struck Bechel Creek, and followed it down to Fairlight Station, where we camped in order to carry out some necessary repairs to the buggy. All the next forenoon the rain continued ; towards midday, however, it cleared off, and we started



BOGGED

again, but hardly had we proceeded three miles before it recommenced, and by evening we were the most miserable objects imaginable. Drowned rats would have had to look to their laurels while we were about.

It was my honourable position to tramp ahead pioneering the track ; the Long'un drove, while Mr. Pickwick ran alongside, whining and shivering incessantly. So wretched did the weather eventually become, that on reaching Bechel Head Station (a rough hut of two rooms) we resolved to accept the

X

manager's hospitality, and camp there for a day or two, in order to see how it would turn out.

The evening before we left, a bullocky put in an appearance, and bewailed the loss of a favourite dog. We were quick to show our sympathy, and offered to make him a present of Mr. Pickwick. He seemed doubtful, but when we described him as an excellent companion, a clever cattle dog, an enthusiastic sportsman, and a sagacious animal generally, he was more



MR. PICKWICK RELUCTANT

than grateful, and led him away to his camp, howling pitifully, at the end of a string. We could have wept tears of thankfulness at his departure, but it was a cruel trick to play on a confiding bullocky. And so farewell to travelled Mr. Pickwick!

When we resumed our march, it was *via* Humeburn to the Paroo River.

One thing at least was certain, in this district the drought had completely broken up; on every hand grass was growing plentifully. Indeed, so quickly does herbage grow after rain in these parts, that one can almost believe one sees it rise out of the ground. Sorghum is nothing to it, and Jack the Giant-killer's beanstalk hardly a circumstance!

The Paroo River, which rises in the Paroo Range, and is reinforced by the Quilberry and Gumbardo Creeks, is, in the wet season, a fine stream, draining

a large area of country. When we crossed it below Humeburn Station, it was running about five feet deep and eighty yards wide, a swift, treacherous current. How to cross it with our buggy and horses was a puzzle. So far, you see, we had only been accustomed to crossing droughts. Floods were altogether a new experience. At last we hit upon a plan. Cutting two thick logs, we drove the horses into the water up to their shoulders, and then, by means of green hide ropes, lashed them (the logs) to the wheels, thus making a sort of raft. These secured, we started the horses swimming, and eventually landed, safe and sound, on the opposite bank about a quarter of a mile below where we had entered the water.

The next creek—and we crossed thirteen of them that day—was not so deep, but it pleased our contrary animals to stick us up in the middle of it; in order, I suppose, to give us an opportunity of wading with all our goods and chattels to the opposite bank before we could move them. They, like ourselves, were not accustomed to running water.

Following the river down, we reach Tilburroo Head Station, and here we camped the night, prior to heading for Cunamulla on the Warrego River. A district rabbit inspector was also a guest at the station, and from him we learnt something of the depredations of these pests. His report was not encouraging. But more of the rabbits later.

During our stay at Tilburroo we heard of the death of two men who had endeavoured to reach that station across country from the west. By some

slip they had got bushed in the Ranges, and when found were both dead, several miles from each other. One, it was discovered, had killed his horse and existed for a little while on the animal's flesh and blood. The other had lost his horse, and his life too. We couldn't help thinking of our own narrow escapes ; but nothing seemed to be thought of this tale of horror by the station folk themselves, so callous do dwellers in the wilderness become.

Bidding 'good-bye' to Tilburroo we proceeded to Sheep Station Creek. Here we saw the first sign of the rabbit in Queensland, several burrows existing within forty yards of our night's camp ; and yet this is fully seventy miles on the other side of what is called 'the rabbit-proof border fence.'

Leaving the higher land and opening out on to the plains again, we had another experience of the heavy black soil. It was awful travelling, for the reason that it clogged our wheels at every turn, necessitating everlasting diggings out, and, what was worse, obliged us to plough our own way through it barefooted, beside the horses, sinking in past our ankles at every step. Added to this we were both of us very far from well. At length after two days' constant toiling, we camped, wearied to death, within a couple of miles of Cunamulla.

For weeks we had looked forward to our arrival in Cunamulla. Here we expected to find sufficient money awaiting us to enable us to refit, and complete our journey in comparative comfort. About ten o'clock next morning we started to overcome the

last two miles. As we tramped along we busily engaged ourselves considering in what manner we might lay our money out to the best advantage. Our disappointment may therefore be judged, when on reaching the river which separated us from the town, we found it to be in big flood, eighty yards in width and sixty or seventy feet in depth; moreover it was running so swift that the punt keeper, whose duty it is to transport vehicles across to the town, absolutely



CUNAMULLA

refused to work. We argued the point with him; he said he wouldn't risk it for fifty buggies. We pointed out to him that ours was only half a buggy, or three-quarters at most. But it was in vain. He was a Scotchman, and wouldn't budge. This being so, there was nothing for it but for one of us to cross to the township to obtain supplies, calling at the bank first for the necessary money. The Long'un volunteered, and was pulled across in a small dinghy.

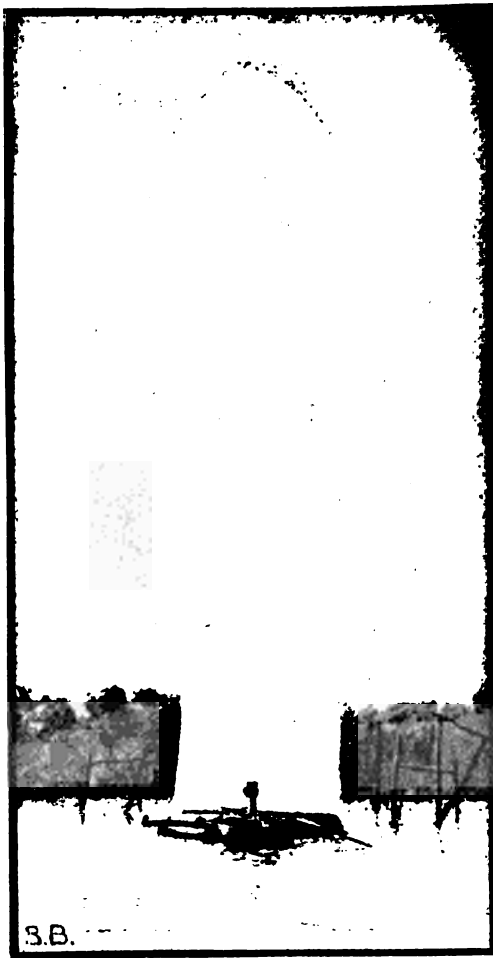
After an hour he returned, terribly cast down, to report that not only were there no letters for us, but that the bank people knew nothing of any drafts. It turned out later, that by some mistake they had all been sent to Thargomindah, more than a hundred miles away.

It was a bitter disappointment: the more so because we had but sixpence to our names, and both of us stood in need not only of raiment but of medical necessities. Leaving the Long'un to look after the horses, I in my turn started across, and went about matters in a new way. The upshot of it all was that when I returned to the boat I was accompanied by the mayor and the chief police officer. They soon got the punt in working order, and ourselves, horses, and buggy transported to the other side. What was more to the point, I had induced an absolute stranger to lend us the wherewithal to obtain the medicines we stood in need of. When, a week later, we repaid him, we said, 'It was a good sign of a good man, and may you never want a friend in the hour of need!' And we meant it!

Just previous to our arrival, Cunamulla had been partially wrecked by a cyclone, and, judging from the appearance of the weather, there was every probability of another.

That night we were the guests of the manager of Burrumbilla Station, eight miles out, and, as it proved, we only reached it just in time, for continuous rains fell for two days after, and, had we been camped out, we should have been obliged to remain

right where we were; travelling would have been impossible.



BURRUMBILLA ARTESIAN BORE

While the guests of this station we were permitted an opportunity of seeing two artesian bores lately put down at the back of the run, and wonderful and

mysterious productions they were. As I have said elsewhere—and it does no harm to repeat it—what they mean, in a country like Queensland, only those who have had experience of its dryness can hope to understand.

From Burrumbilla we passed along the Warrego to the border of Queensland and New South Wales, crossing it at Barrington on November 11 at 10.30 A.M.

From Barrington to Bourke the track is bleak and uninteresting; sandhills and black soil flats follow sandhills and black soil flats in endless succession. Rabbits in great numbers infest the entire district, and bitter is the warfare between them and the squatter.

Leaving Belalie Station, our first camping place on the New South Wales side, we passed through Engonia township, if by such a name a few scattered habitations may be called, and headed, in pouring rain, past Native Dog Bore (one of the largest artesian bores in Australia, 471 feet deep, and yielding a supply of 2,000,000 gallons per diem) for the Grass Hut. Our camp that night, twelve miles past the bore, was a dreary one. Our blankets were wet through, our roof was the dripping mulga scrub, it was too wet to light a fire, and we had little horse feed and no water. For although a considerable quantity of rain had fallen, the ground was so parched that it soaked in immediately it touched the earth.

Two stages later we sighted the long looked-for Darling River, a few miles above Bourke. What a happy camp that was, and how merrily next morning we rattled over the fine bridge into the town itself!

It was indeed a proud moment in our lives, when we pulled up at the door of our hotel ; for more than half our long journey across the continent was accomplished. Cyclops and Polyphemus had brought us through like the rat-tailed, banana-stumped heroes they were! Bravo, Cyclops! Well done, Polyphemus!! You're a pair of equine trumps, and here's my best respects to you!!!

CHAPTER XIX

*BOURKE—WE PREPARE FOR A ROW OF 1,500 MILES—
RIVER STEAMERS—THE DARLING RIVER—WILCANNIA
—WEINTERIGA—MENINDIE—THE 'DECOY'*



AFTER our long absence from any big town, there was something almost terrifying about the size of Bourke. Her streets, with their metropolitan air, her shops and palatial banks, to say nothing of our hotel with its obsequious waiters, quite overpowered us. When we arrived, our appearances did not say much in our favour. The Long'un was by many degrees the more presentable, but he was by no means decent; as for me I was outside the pale altogether. My one remaining shirt had lost both its arms; my moleskin trousers were a mass of shreds and patches, and my boots had their soles wired on. My pith helmet was a sight to see, and weep over! At first sight we looked a precious pair of ruffians, and it was only when we had explained matters, that the landlord consented to take us in at all.

As soon as we had stabled Cyclops and Polyph-

mus, we set out for the Post Office, obtained our letters, discovered our bank, cashed our drafts, and then repaired in haste to a tailor's shop, where we arrayed ourselves to the best of our ability in ready-made clothing. It is wonderful what a difference a suit of clothes makes to a man's pluck. When we entered the shop we felt the poorest pair of mortals in the whole of Australia, but when we came out in our new rigs, we would have passed the time of day to the Governor himself. Thus poverty makes cowards of us all.

Bourke, for so far west, is a fine town, built on the west bank of the Darling River, and is connected with Sydney by rail. Though a long distance from the capital, it possesses all the advantages of the most up to date civilisation. It has its school of arts, theatre, rowing, racing, and tennis clubs, swimming baths, etc., and a population of 3,149 souls, out of which number enough can be gleaned to make up a refined and intellectual society.

As other proofs of its civilisation, on a vacant piece of land opposite our hotel, when we arrived, a steam merry-go-round, in full swing of business, was making night hideous with 'Ta-ra-ra-boomdeay' (an air whose acquaintance we made for the first time); while, in a bank dining room hard by, we could see, from our window, a dinner party proceeding with all the ceremony of a similar function in Park Lane or Pott's Point. According to the advertisements Ibsen's 'Doll's House' was being played at the Bijou Theatre, while a prize fight was being conducted at a hall within easy distance. As a Bourke resident

observed when I drew his attention to these things, 'You certainly can't say we're behind the times!'

The following morning, soon after breakfast, a gentleman called upon us, with a view of relieving us of our horses and much enduring buggy. Accordingly, after taking the opportunity of having them photographed, we bade a reluctant farewell to the two faithful animals who had been our companions for so long a distance, and in so many hours of bitter trouble and privation. We both experienced a real feeling of sorrow in saying farewell to them; and we were glad to hear they were likely to be kindly treated. The buyer intended to give them a holiday for a month or two, and then to start them back a considerable distance on their tracks into Queensland. Had we been able to afford it we should have pensioned them off, but as we were almost as poor as they, it was useless to think of such a thing.

That business concluded, we sought the river bank and inquired among the boatmen there for a rowing boat in which to continue our journey for the next fifteen hundred miles. Owing, however, to the late disastrous flood, and the fact that there was every prospect of another (for the river was rising rapidly), we had considerable difficulty in hearing of one. But money overcomes most difficulties, and the bribe of a couple of drinks brought us a man, who knew a man, who knew another man who had an old boat, he had made himself, for sale. Our informant, for another consideration, volunteered to row us up the river to have a look at her.

She was certainly far from handsome, but for that matter neither were our horses nor buggy, yet they had proved themselves good bargains. We examined her carefully, and finding it was almost a case of Hobson's choice, purchased her for about twice as much as she had been worth when new.

The heat was tremendous, and as we knew we should be compelled to lie out in mid-stream on our



OUR BOAT

down river journey, we resolved to fix up some sort of an awning before we started. This we accomplished with two cart tilts and a yard or two of canvas, making an admirable shade. By sundown, our preparations were completed; then, having laid in a large amount of stores, and accepted the good wishes of our new made friends, we pushed out into mid-stream, and started on our long row.

Fortunately the river was in high flood, and in

consequence the current ran briskly. We took things easily, the rowing especially, and until the novelty wore off, and we had to work in downright earnest, enjoyed the change hugely. Then the reflection that so many miles had to be accomplished between sunrise and sunset every day, began to assert itself, and as it did, our pleasure in the exercise diminished.

For the first twenty miles or so out of Bourke we had constant companions in the fishermen who lined the banks. The lives of these gentry must be monotonous beyond all idea. Too lazy to do real work, they manage to knock out sufficient money to keep them in the bare necessities of life by fishing for Murray cod—a fine big fish and remarkably good eating. First cousins to these men are the ‘Darling whalers,’ as they are called: idle, loafing, thieving tramps, somewhat after the fashion of the ‘Travellers’ in North Queensland, who move up and down the river (up one bank and down the other), from year’s end to year’s end, doing no work and depending for their existence upon the charity of the unfortunate squatter. When they can’t steal from him they practise on each other, and these are the gentry who generally promote, and invariably assist in, the strikes, wool-shed burnings, bush fires, horse and sheep stealing, and other little pleasantries of a like description. A ‘Darling whaler’ is, if anything, lower than the ‘Traveller,’ who is lower than the scum of the earth, and even in saying that you are paying both of them too high a compliment!

From Bourke downwards the river is a noble

stream (I am speaking of it as it was at the time of our journey), in places many miles in width. The bends are very numerous, and horribly annoying, the river proper running for the first eight hundred miles as much as three miles of water to every one of land. Fortunately for us, its usual high mud-banks were almost entirely submerged, and this with the great forest gums, half hidden under water, gave it a most strange, yet picturesque effect. Save for



STEAMER AND WOOLBARGE

the discordant shrieks of the cockatoos in the trees overhead, a wonderful quiet reigned; the splashing of our oars sounded strangely loud in the stillness, and a steamer's panting could be heard many miles away, as plainly as if she were only round the bend.

These river steamers, and the men they employ, are strange concerns. In good seasons they trade right away from Goolwa in South Australia, to Walgett, above Bourke, in New South Wales, a distance of something like 2,345 miles. In construction they are flat-bottomed, absurdly wide-beamed, two or three

decked, paddle-wheeled tubs, steered from a bridge, and driven, in most instances, by ordinary traction engines, balanced and secured amidships. They are manned by a captain, mate, engineer, and half a dozen hands, and



CAPTAIN OF A RIVER STEAMER

not unfrequently they tow two large barges behind them. A steamer heavily loaded, and towing two barges crammed with wool, swinging round the bend, is a sight worth going a long way to see; and when anything goes wrong, and the captain expresses himself according to his native instinct, it is as good as a Crystal Palace firework display.

The captains are great heroes, and carry more silver mounted dignity than a page-boy in a new livery, or a curate in his first

canonicals. When they bring their boat up to a township, all that township has got to know about it, or something breaks. It's the ambition of every boy along the Darling banks to be a river captain, and if that is impossible, to be a supercargo. This is the

individual who hangs around and talks affably to the captain as they wharf up, just for all the world as if he owned the whole boat, flag-post, painted name board, and all.

In this fashion, for weeks together, we continued our journey, sometimes resting at stations, but in most instances camping out on the river banks. Talking of camping-out on Darling banks reminds me of the gratitude we continually expressed for having brought our mosquito nets. Anything like the Darling mosquitoes I have never met with elsewhere; they're as big as camels, and twice as ugly. They seem to bite at the rate of a thousand bites a minute, and each bite brings up a lump as big as a pigeon's egg—*almost*! Then you scratch them (the bumps, not the mosquitoes), and that makes them worse, after which, if there's nothing wrong with your constitution, and there have been no defects in your education, you swear, or employ a professional to do it for you. A grey mosquito will, as I have just said, raise a lump like a pigeon's egg, and profanity as big as a church. He's also no respecter of persons—he'd just as soon bite a bishop as a pig-stealer. Apart from these annoyances camping on the river is delightful.

It is pleasant in the stillness of the night, lying out on the bank, to hear in the distance the low panting of a steamer coming up against the stream. First you think you hear it, then you think you don't. Then your companion declares it to be a bullfrog, and you lose your temper contradicting him. But bit by bit the noise draws closer, the panting grows every

moment more distinct, then round the bend glare two enormous red eyes, which you know to be her bridge lamps. After that she appears to be stationary for some time, but at length, with a great churning noise and a long trail of sparks, she comes slowly up, grunts and groans majestically by, turns the corner, and that is the last you see of her. The noise of her engines gradually grows more and more faint, and then you curl up in your blankets and once more fall asleep.

Strange to say, for the first two or three hundred miles of our river journey, game was none too plentiful, though a few wild duck could now and again be obtained; owing to the height of the river the majority had migrated on to the lagoons in the back country. To our surprise, also, we saw but few rabbits, in spite of all we had heard of their depredations. But we were to have greater experience of them anon.

After a pleasant rest at Dunlop, one of the finest properties along the whole length of the river, and renowned for its wonderful wool-shed, magnificent head station, and three fine artesian bores, we proceeded on again. Two days later, we had the good fortune to be taken on board by a trading steamer, the 'Florence Annie,' and given a free passage to Wilcannia township, the halfway house of our Darling journey. Verily these bushmen are a hospitable folk. It was an enjoyable voyage, and the owner, Mr. Brown, proved a most courteous, interesting, and agreeable man. From him we learnt much of the history of the river.

Wilcannia is a nice little township, situated on the river bank, and possesses a population of 1,287 souls. It boasts a few nice buildings, and its tree-planted streets give it a charming effect. It is from Wilcannia that the camel teams start west with stores, and, in fact, it is to the existence of the river, and the fact of being the depot for the West, that it alone owes its existence. A coach runs twice weekly up the river to Bourke, another down the river to Wentworth, and still another across country *via* Menindie, to famous Broken Hill. Numerous passenger steamers, such as they are, also ply between the smaller river townships.

During our stay in Wilcannia we had the pleasure of the acquaintance of the postmaster, Mr. Holding, a most interesting and well informed gentleman, to whose kindness we owe more than we can ever repay: also that of Mr. Doake, a Wilcannia merchant. Both these gentlemen are great authorities on the river generally, and talk with considerable warmth about the undoubted future which lies before the Darling Valley. Indeed, it would appear that the wealth of the valley, in its soil, is boundless; its capabilities cannot be even guessed at. To understand something of its powers one must see what results can be obtained even by limited irrigation.

While I write, a scheme is under consideration for locking and conserving the waters of this enormous river. When this is accomplished, we may indeed expect great results to follow. There is nothing, so I have been confidently assured, that the

soil will not produce, from wheat to tobacco, and we may therefore look forward to the time when the whole valley, now so bleak and lonesome, will teem with agriculture; to the time when, in place of the few isolated station houses which now dot the river bank, mile after mile of happy homes will be seen nestling among revenue returning vegetation. The river is there, the soil is there, and before very long we have every right to expect that the people and the vegetation will be there also.

From Wilcannia we pulled on to Weinteriga Station, the property of an old friend, Mr. George Riddoch. Here we intended to remain for some time, to recruit after our eight hundred mile row. And indeed it was a pleasant place to spell awhile in. Everything that the kindness of the hospitable manager and his wife could devise for our comfort



was done, and it will be long before we forget the happy time we spent at this station. Here we had a good opportunity of studying the rabbit plague in all its bearings, and many and strange were the stories told of these pests. Let us consider the question.

At first thought it would seem an easy thing for four governments, with unlimited capital at their command, to cope with poor simple little bunny, and finally to exterminate him altogether. And yet every possible remedy has been tried, by the colonies of

South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales, and Queensland; and what is worse, tried without success.

The havoc the rabbits have wrought exceeds all belief. On driving through the scrub the grass is seen to be completely devoured, nearly every tree and bush has been barked by their fatal little teeth, while, not in one but in hundreds of instances, they might be observed hanging dead in the forks, having *climbed up* in search of food and, like Absalom, got caught among the branches. It is a case of the survival of the fittest; the rabbit who can't climb dies, and it is a question for the scientists whether or not this new propensity will have any effect on the future breed; possibly, they may become solely tree-climbing animals.

One of the most effectual methods of exterminating them is to poison the water they drink, for Australian bunny is a thirsty little beast. The process is as follows. A dam or tank is chosen in a spot where the rabbits are most plentiful, and where they have to depend entirely on this tank for their drinking supply. Close meshed netting is then placed round it, only to be opened when the sheep of the paddock are allowed in to drink. For two or three days the rabbits are deprived altogether of water, and come to the verge of perishing. Then a long narrow trench is dug just outside the dam. This is filled with arsenic and water, wire netted all round above six inches from the ground, to prevent the sheep getting to the poisoned fluid. Towards evening the rabbits make their appearance, hopping and scurry-

ing all over the plain in countless millions. They come to drink and remain to die, leaping over each other in their anxiety to get to the water. Before morning thousands are poisoned, and the ground, for acres round the pool, is covered layers deep with dead and dying. This seems to have proved, up to the present, by far the best method of dealing with them.

At one period I learned that no less than a hundred million acres were infested, on which 25,280,000 rabbits were destroyed in twelve months; while over a million pounds has been spent by the governments of three most infected colonies in the struggle. The following were the exact figures up to March 1893:—

	£
New South Wales	737,000
Victoria	210,342
South Australia	297,000
Total	<u>£1,244,342</u>

Wire netting has been used extensively for fencing, the description being 17 gauge, $1\frac{1}{4}$ inch mesh, and 42 inches in width. In New South Wales one uninterrupted line extends from Narramine on the Macquarie River, to Bourke, on the Darling, a distance of 207 miles, thence to Barrington a further length of 84 miles, at an average cost of 82*l.* a mile. Another fence has been constructed from the Murray River northward, along the western boundary of the colony, a distance of 346 miles. The cost of this alone was 26,135*l.*, or on an average, 75*l.* 10*s.* 8 $\frac{1}{4}$ *d.* per mile. The colony of Queensland has netted all her

southern border line, from the sea coast to Haddons Corner; and beside these government fences, almost every pastoralist has protected his own property at a similar enormous expense. It would be thought that these precautions would check the ravages of the pests. But not a bit of it; bunny simply climbs the fence with the utmost unconcern, and continues his work of destruction on the other side. And where he once settles it is impossible for sheep to live. He eats them out of house and home, and when he has finished all there is upon the ground, as I have said, he climbs the trees and lives upon the branches. It has been computed that one pair of rabbits may be the progenitors of 3,000,000 in three years. If this be so, what will be the progeny of *three hundred million pairs* in the same space of time? It's a pretty little calculation!

On many stations along the Darling there is no escaping them; they rifle the gardens, climb the netting and raid the lucerne patches. You find them in the verandah, in the dining-room, and even in your bedroom under your bed. Government has a standing reward of five thousand pounds for a remedy against them, and thousands have tried to obtain it, Pasteur among the number. One of the ablest ideas was that of an old lady in Wagga, who suggested strewing about pieces of apple covered with cayenne pepper, so that bunny should eat, sneeze, and dislocate his vertebræ. She is wondering to this day, they tell me, why the prize was not awarded her. But to return to my log-book.

After a goodrest among the kind folk of Weinteriga Station and the surrounding neighbourhood, we disposed of our boat and took passage aboard the 'Decoy' steamer for Wentworth. It was not customary for this steamer to carry passengers, but as a great favour the captain consented to take us on board, and we hope he did not regret it.

The 'Decoy' is a well built, handsome boat, originally imported for conveying cattle up and down the Darling. Her captain, a smart, active man, proved to be well informed about the river, and was not averse to giving us the benefit of his knowledge.

On the night of the day following our farewell to Weinteriga we reached Menindie, a tiny township perched on an awful red sandbank overlooking the river, and as dreary and monotonous a spot, even in the moonlight, as could well be found on the face of the earth. It reminded us of Windorah more than any other place, and for that reason, if for no other, did not find favour in our eyes. We tied up to the bank for the night (boats proceeding down stream with barges, of which we had two, usually tie up at night), and with the captain went ashore to investigate. There was nothing to be heard, and still less to be seen, so we returned on board at an early hour and amused ourselves for the rest of the evening, comparing bumps and swearing at the mosquitoes.

Next morning at daylight we proceeded on our way again, stopping, after we had gone about ten miles, to wood up. These wood piles are often the commencement of small townships, and the lives of the wood-

cutters must be desolate in the extreme. Everyone lends a hand to get wood on board, and it's just as well to keep your weather eye lifted for snakes whilst so doing. A snake is no respecter of persons, and it is annoying to be bitten when hundreds of miles away from a doctor. Besides, not unfrequently you die!

Sometimes, but not often, we passed other steamers.

When we did, greetings were most cordially bellowed between the boats.

And so our days jogged quietly by, finding us occupied for the most part in reading, yarning, sleeping, and smoking. The heat was intense, alternating between 100 and 114° in the shade of the wheel house. Certainly the most interesting thing about the journey was the navigation. This is a matter to marvel over, for a good skipper has to be intimately acquainted with every current, shoal, snag, rock, and sandbank in the whole length of this ever changing, ever curving river, and for a distance of something like two thousand miles. The working of the barges is in itself quite an art, and our skipper was a perfect master of both branches of his trade. Moreover he was chock full of stories of the river, and at night when the boat was safely tied up, and he free for conversation, he liked nothing better than to tell them.

Every evening, also, as soon as we were made fast, we made it a custom to take a plunge overboard. Then the full moon peering through the lofty tree-tops, the smooth flowing river, and the steamer and barges alongside the bank, showed us an exceedingly pretty picture. Another of our amusements was,

towards evening, to seat ourselves on one of the paddle boxes and watch our Chinese cook slaughter our next day's dinner. He was a fine fellow, this cook, and had once been steward aboard a mail-boat running between Hong Kong and London, a fact of which he was inordinately vain. His description of the Lord Mayor's Show, in pigeon English, would have made a cat laugh!

The further we progressed down stream, the nearer the stations came together. We could not help being struck with the wonderful growth (the result of irrigation) exhibited in the gardens. It almost exceeded belief. Sometimes we would stop an hour or so to land goods or to take in wool, when we were permitted an opportunity of examining into these marvels for ourselves. Irrigation is undoubtedly the watchword of the Darling Valley!

But at length, as all things must, our pleasant voyage came to an end. Ahead of us we could discern the outlying houses of the township of Wentworth. A few minutes later we were in full view of the township itself, had passed under the wonderful new bridge, and drawn up to the river bank below the town wharf.

As soon as the gang plank was out, a gentlemanly youth came aboard and uttered my name. Introducing himself, he handed me a telegram from the Messrs. Chaffey, giving us an invitation to visit their Irrigation colonies on the Murray River, and notifying us of the fact that one of their river steamers would call at Wentworth, that evening, to convey us to Mildura.

CHAPTER XX

*WENTWORTH—THE MURRAY RIVER—THE AUSTRALIAN
IRRIGATION COLONIES—MORGAN—ADELAIDE AGAIN.*



THE town of Wentworth is situated about a quarter of a mile above the junction of the Murray river with the little larger bush township. She boasts a fine main street, a superabundance of hotels, a substantial gaol, a court house, several churches, a fire brigade, and a population of 801 souls. We explored the main street, sampled the hotels, visited the gaol (not professionally), climbed to the top of the fire tower, took the churches for granted, and carried away a good opinion of as many of the 801 souls as we were made acquainted with. It was a warm day, 114° in the shadow of the stone verandah of the court house. A bulldog lay

panting on the doormat of the police office ; **he said** it was quite hot enough for him ; as for us, **we were** not only roasted but a trifle overdone.

Hospitality and conviviality are the **watchwords** of the Wentworthians, and if we had accepted **all** the invitations we received, we should have been **hopelessly** incapable before we had been an hour in the place.

Fortunately, however, just before sundown the



River Murray Steam Navigation Company's boat 'Nellie' puts in an appearance round the bend, and after describing a stately circle draws up at the town wharf. She is a magnificent, white-painted, three-decked affair ; the engines and crew are located on the first deck, the saloon and passengers on the second, while a smoking room and the wheel house are situated high up aloft, almost on a level with the funnel. Everything is up to date, even to the extent

of a gorgeous name plate and a stewardess. As soon as she is alongside (the boat, not the stewardess) we step aboard and introduce ourselves. The captain has instructions to look after us, and we place ourselves under his care forthwith.

After tea, in the eye of one of the most glorious sunsets I have ever seen, a sunset which streaks the sky and river into a perfect kaleidoscope of ever-changing colours, we return on board, and the order is given to 'cast loose.' With a tinkling of falling water, the head and stern lines are thrown off, somebody sings out 'All clear astern,' and the 'Nellie' wheels majestically round into mid-stream, whistling furiously. The captain takes the wheel, the stewardess throws a farewell kiss ashore, and we ascend to the smoking deck, draw chairs forrard of the wheel house, light our pipes, and prepare to enjoy the beauties of the evening.

It is indeed a glorious night. Hardly a sound save the throbbing of the engines and the splashing of the paddle wheels, somewhere deep down in the mysterious regions beneath us, breaks the stillness. The evening star is just beginning to twinkle, a last lingering touch of sunset lies low upon the horizon, and on either hand the reflections in the mirror-like water surpass belief. Trees, cows, boats, and citizens are all reproduced with a faithfulness to detail bordering on the magical.

About five minutes after leaving the wharf we reach the point where the mighty Darling joins the still mightier Murray, which, thus reinforced, con-

tinues her journey to the sea nearly six hundred miles distant. Strange to say, after their junction, for some reason of their own, the waters refuse to assimilate, and on this account, for many miles, that on one bank is of a sombre muddy hue, while that on the other is of a bluer and much more transparent colour. It is as though each is struggling to maintain to the very last the supremacy it has so long enjoyed.

Owing to the heavy floods all along the valley of the Darling, she (the Darling) is much the bigger river. In fact, the Murray, in summer time, is hardly navigable above the junction. For miles ahead gleaming patches of white sand bestrew the course, and in and out of these treacherous banks we wind our way with wondrous delicacy. One moment we are close in shore, so close that the boughs of the trees overhang our decks, only the next to be far out in the centre of the stream, dashing along at a comparatively furious pace. It is dangerous work, and our captain cheers us with the news that we shall probably go aground two or three times before we get to Mildura; in fact, just as he finishes speaking, there is a sound of much ringing in the engine room below, steam is suddenly shut off, and the next moment we are grating grimly over a sandbank. But this is only a narrow shoal, and in less than a minute we are back again in deep water, dashing along in and out of the treacherous patches as fast as ever. It is a wonderful exhibition of steering, and we thoroughly enjoy it.

When the moon rises and reveals the dense primeval bush on either hand, the long stretch of river, and the weird grey patches of sand, the scene is impressively beautiful. But every moment the navigation is becoming more and more difficult, till presently the skipper, being afraid to attempt a certain channel without daylight, decides to tie up at the next wood pile. Taking his advice, we determine to turn in and endeavour to obtain some rest before the mosquitoes find us out ; but we are too late, our comfortable cabins are chock full of the pests. We scratch and swear, swear and scratch, half the night. When they have worked their wicked will, and there is not a square inch of our anatomy unbitten, we fall asleep. It is hard upon four o'clock when next we wake.

Then, hearing voices on the smoking deck we ascend thither, to discover a small coterie of pyjama-clad travellers taking advantage of the cool. The steamer is alongside another bank, and it is only on inquiry that we find that we are at our destination—Mildura. However, in this dim light (it wants an hour to sunrise) nothing can be seen of the township, so we join the circle, and exchange ideas on men and places for another hour, returning to our cabins just as the east is becoming suffused with the rosy herald of another day.

The view of Mildura obtainable from the river is certainly not beautiful, nor, I must say, is it calculated to impress upon a stranger the fact that he has arrived at the far famed Australian Irrigation

Colonies. A high hill hides the town, and the only buildings to be seen are the galvanised iron sheds of the company's engineering works, the top of Messrs. Chaffey's office, the roof of the splendid new coffee palace, and the residences of Messrs. W. B. & Geo. Chaffey, on the summit of the hill.

After breakfast we climb this hill and approach



MILDURA FROM THE RIVER

the office, pausing in the garden to admire the wonderful wealth of flowers and shrubs, and to listen to the cool splashing of the fountain. A pleasant office this, surrounded by a deep verandah, over which a luxuriant creeper twines its sinuous green arms.

As soon as we are announced, Mr. Waddingham (Messrs. Chaffey's manager) hastens forth to receive us, and in a few moments introduces us to his prin-

cipal (Mr. W. B. Chaffey) who welcomes us to Mildura, while at the same time he refers, in congratulatory terms, to our journey across the Continent.

After a brief delay, consequent upon Mr. Chaffey being called away on some business connected with the late unfortunate water troubles (which have had such a disastrous effect upon this struggling community), we are invited to accompany him on a drive round the settlement. This invitation we gladly accept.

In order that we may see and understand everything from the beginning to the end, we start with the great pumping stations. Here we behold these tremendous triple expansion monsters hard at work raising the water to the reservoirs and channels, in some cases a lift of eighty feet. Then, having made ourselves conversant with the means of raising the precious fluid, and admired the buildings themselves, which are admirably built and kept, we pass on to the channels which carry the water as great a distance as fifteen miles in every direction, and assist in irrigating no less than 10,000 acres of land. Then, resuming our drive, we inspect the holdings or blocks themselves, and in so doing drive along many fine roads and streets, each bordered with thriving trees, through whose interlacing boughs may be seen many neat, well-kept villas and tiny homesteads. Wonderful places are these selections, varying considerably in size, and wonderful is the growth to be observed upon them. Apricots, peaches, figs, oranges, lemons, vines, all seem to thrive in the same luxuriant fashion, while every inch

of ground testifies to the owner's unbounded interest and never-ceasing care.

On either hand we see people hard at work. To our right we have a new comer clearing the timber from his patch, another ploughing, or grading his land for the reception of the water. Across the road, on our left, peeps forth the bungalow of an older colonist. Further down the same street is a merry party of young Englishmen, hoeing for their lives; while on a corner block we are fortunate enough to catch a retired Indian official, working as though his very existence depended on it. They are all industrious, and if we may judge by appearances, they are all contented with the prospects of the place.

In order that we may gather some idea of what the land was like before the Messrs. Chaffey took it in hand, we are driven, past a succession of lovely vineyards, over the border into the unreclaimed bush. What a scene is there! Eye-aching desolation, stunted timber, red sand, rabbits, and utter hopelessness! And yet not so hopeless after all, for looking across the boundary fence, we see acre upon acre, and mile upon mile of smiling prosperity, nestling homesteads, luxuriant orchards, healthy vineyards, well-made roads, running water, and all the evidences of an advanced civilisation. Mr. Chaffey, with a note of allowable pride in his voice, says, as he points from Mildura to this wilderness, 'Five years ago, that was all like this.' It seems impossible! We look and look, and as we look, we feel like taking off our hats to the pluck and indomitable perseverance

of the men who have wrought this marvellous transformation. It is a wonderful and powerful argument; an argument that appeals to us, and one that, even if we wished to, we could not refute. Bravo! Messrs. Chaffey. You came, you saw, and you have certainly conquered. You have borne the burden and heat of the day; let no man grudge you your well-earned laurels!

Returning to the township, we are introduced to the Mildura Canning Factory, a most valuable institution, which purchases, uses, and disposes of as much of the product of the settlement as the settlers are able and inclined to sell.

And now let me say a few words with regard to those products themselves. There can be, in the first place, no doubt but that, with irrigation, the land will produce almost anything. Vines are, perhaps, most freely cultivated, but after them, apricots, peaches, figs, plums, oranges, and lemons are next in favour. Grapes are perhaps most popular, for the reason that they yield some return after the first year. A first class vineyard, in full bearing, should be worth something like 50*l.* a year per acre in a good season. A wine-making firm has lately opened in the settlement, and will purchase freely from the settlers. Apricots, at present prices, would be worth over 40*l.* per acre on the trees, and for drying purposes have yielded from 8*l.* to 15*l.* per acre the third season. During this year as much as 14*l.* per ton was obtained for apricots, and 18*l.* per ton for peaches. These prices would be equivalent to a

return of about 40%. or 50%. per acre for each description of fruit, when the trees have come into full bearing.

It is computed, and very fairly too, I think, that an industrious, painstaking, and capable man might derive a profit of three hundred pounds a year from a ten acre block, when once the trees are fairly matured. But he will have to bring all his intelligence and energy to bear to do it. There must be no skrimshanking at Mildura.

After luncheon we drive out again in another direction, and inspect more and more blocks, meeting on every hand with the same cordial welcome, and nearly always coming away impressed with the same pleasing results. I say nearly always, because, of course, there must be some failures in such a gigantic undertaking. But it is vigorously borne in upon us, by folk interested and uninterested alike, that these failures must, in the majority of cases, be attributed solely to the carelessness and idleness of their proprietors, and not in any way to the failure of the land to fulfil its share of the contract. 'The land will grow anything with water and proper care,' was the universal cry; and certainly it would appear so.

Not being content with the assurances of the promoters alone, though I do not for one moment doubt the truth of what they tell me, I set myself to obtain the views of the landholders themselves, and with one exception, and only one, they are eminently satisfactory. There are differences of opinion in detail, it is true, but on the vital question of solidity

and future prospects, I find but one voice. They (the settlers) intend to stick to their properties as tight as they know how, confident that in the not far distant future, that trust will be amply repaid to them. And surely it cannot be doubted that, with the enormous markets which must ultimately be found, not only in the great cities of Australia but throughout the whole length and breadth of the colonies themselves, letting the outside world stand as if it did not exist at all, there is a future before these Irrigation colonies of which none of us can have any possible conception.

Again, when the proposed railroad to Melbourne, 350 miles distant, across the vast mallee plains shall be completed, a ready market for early, well-packed, fresh fruit will be discovered which it is hoped will prove but another opening for wonderful Mildura.

On our return to the office we make the acquaintance of Mr. McKay, the able editor of the 'Mildura Cultivator,' a gentleman whose straightforward pluck and ability has done much to help forward the colony with which he has thrown in his lot. From his lips we learn the reason for, and the history of, the great water struggle; this was a bitter faction fight, which has done untold harm to the advancement of Mildura; and strangely enough, as from his lips fall prophecies of future peace, a telegram from Melbourne parliamentary folk is handed in, announcing the satisfactory termination of the trouble.

By this time the sun is low down on the horizon, and we are due to partake of Mr. Chaffey's hospitality

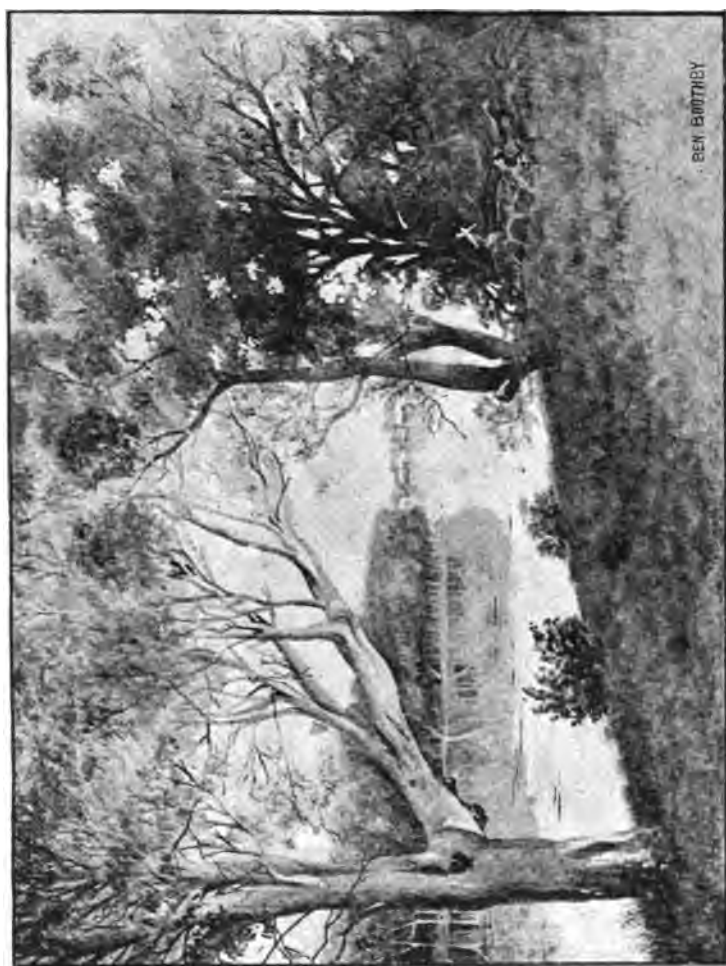
in his own house. A short drive along the frontage of the town brings us to the entrance gates of as noble a mansion as the heart of man could desire. Winding drives, well trimmed lawns, sparkling fountains, and beds of gorgeous flowers, front this charming residence. A spacious conservatory occupies one end, and from the windows a most perfect view can be obtained of the river, and the settlement growing up along its bank.



MR. W. B. CHAFFEY'S HOUSE

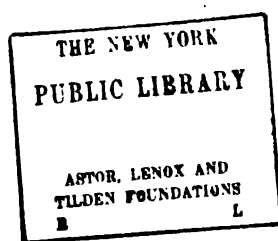
Leaving the house, we return to the office to bid our kind friend Mr. Waddingham good-bye. After which, as the saloon bell is ringing for dinner, we re-embark upon our boat, and continue our down-river journey.

Next day at noon we reach Renmark. Here we have the pleasure of renewing our acquaintance with the Chaffey family, in the person of Mr. Charles Chaffey, who has charge of this younger colony. We make his acquaintance, as we made his brother's, in



BEN BODDIE

THE MURRAY ABOVE RENMARK



the cool verandah-shaded office of the company, overlooking a lovely garden and two fine tennis courts.

After a brief chat on the prospects of Renmark, a well-appointed four-horse drag makes its appearance, and mounting it we proceed, under the able guidance of Mr. Chaffey, to explore Renmark as we did Mildura.

Renmark, it must be remembered, is the younger of the two colonies, and has perhaps had more to contend against than her elder sister. But her troubles are happily over, the channels are safely concreted, and any future water difficulty provided against, so that we may soon expect to hear of astonishing results.

As at Mildura, we inspect holding after holding with scrupulous care, examine the mighty pumps, observe with amazement the contrivances for carrying water over seemingly impossible levels, and finally after a charming drive through the bush, reach Bookmark Station, where we are afforded an opportunity of seeing some results of irrigation on a small scale.

Just as night is falling our steamer comes into view, trailing a cloud of sparks behind her, and when she puts in for us we bid 'good-bye' to the truly great Australian Irrigation colonies, and their representative, Mr. Chaffey.

It is a superb moonlight night, and warm enough to permit of our camping on deck. Fortunately, we are steaming against the breeze, so there are no mosquitoes. Strange thought, after all our wanderings: this is our last night in the Bush.

Next evening (Sunday), we are in Morgan, and at 7.30 on Monday morning catch the train for Adelaide.

The journey to the capital is monotonous and uninteresting. The distance is only about ninety miles, and yet it takes about four and a half hours to accomplish it. With the utmost eagerness we look out for the first sight of the blue waters of St. Vincent's Gulf, and when we do see it and realise that we have in reality crossed the entire Continent, what a strange feeling is ours! We reflect that it is a year and a month, almost to a day, since we left Normanton, and the Gulf of Carpentaria! It seems like twice the time!

And through what experiences we have passed since we bade 'good-bye' to Adelaide that stormy morning in December '91. Ours has been a long succession of tedious wanderings: we have seen many strange countries, we have covered thousands of miles of land and water, we have risked our lives, and suffered many privations, and with what result?

A greater knowledge of the world, a greater knowledge of men and manners, and the furtherance of a friendship that is all the stronger for being tried and tested in the red-hot fires of Poverty and Adversity. Dear old Long'un, firm friend and staunch companion, here's a hand to you. Without your sterling pluck where should I have been on many queer occasions? Go on and prosper as you deserve! My only hope is that you may never regret the fateful day we twain set out together to see life 'On the Wallaby.'

A

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